

# Send Coupon below and I'll prove I can make *YOU* A NEW MAN!

Here's PROOF from some of my Pupils!



Chest 48 ins.  
Biceps 16 ins.

My magnificent development is attributed to "Dynamic-Tension."

A. M., London, E.1.



Marvellous development—I am still carrying on with your course.

H. M. Holland.



I was thin and underweight but now I possess the following:  
Chest 48 ins.  
Neck 17 ins.  
Biceps 17 ins.  
Thighs 25 ins.  
E.W., London, N.W.3

## 7-Day Trial Offer

I COULD fill this whole magazine with enthusiastic reports from OTHERS. But what you want to know is—"What can Atlas do for ME?"

Find out—at my risk! Right in first 7 days I'll start to PROVE I can turn YOU into a man of might and muscle. And it will be the kind of PROOF you (and anyone else) can SEE, FEEL, MEASURE with a tape!

My FREE BOOK tells about my amazing 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER—an offer no other instructor has ever DARED make! If YOU want smashing strength, big muscles, glowing health—I'll show you results QUICK!

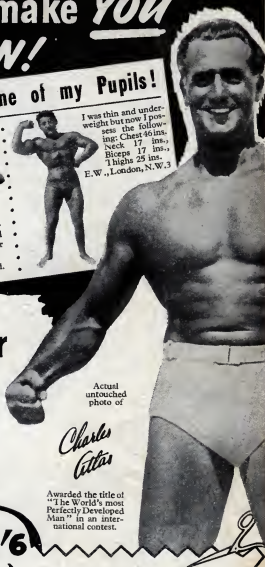
48-Page Book

**Not 5/- Not 2/6  
but FREE!**

I myself was once a 7-stone weakling—sickly, half-alive. Then I discovered "Dynamic-Tension." And I twice won—against all comers—the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"!

I have no use for apparatus. "Dynamic-Tension" ALONE (right in your own home) will make you the powerful muscular NEW MAN you have always longed to be!

Make me PROVE it! Gamble a postage stamp. Send coupon for my FREE BOOK AT ONCE! Charles Atlas, Dept. 125-Q, 2 Dean Street, London, W.1.



Actual untouched photo of

*Charles Atlas*

Awarded the title of "The World's most Perfectly Developed Man" in an international contest.

**CHARLES ATLAS**

(Dept. 125-Q),

2 DEAN STREET, LONDON, W.1

I want proof that your system of "Dynamic-Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, busy body and big muscular development. Send me your book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," FREE and details of your amazing 7-Day Trial offer.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print or write plainly)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

A STREET AND SMITH PUBLICATION

BRITISH  
9<sup>TH</sup>  
EDITION

*Astounding*  
**SCIENCE FICTION**

MARCH



THE CURRENTS OF SPACE BY FRANK R. PAUL

# *Astounding* **SCIENCE FICTION**

---

Vol. IX, No. 3. (British Edition)

---

March 1953

---

## Contents

### *Serial*

THE CURRENTS OF SPACE . . . . . Isaac Asimov 2

### *Novelettes*

THE BIG HUNGER . . . . . Walter M. Miller, Jr. 39

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR . . . . . M. C. Pease 47

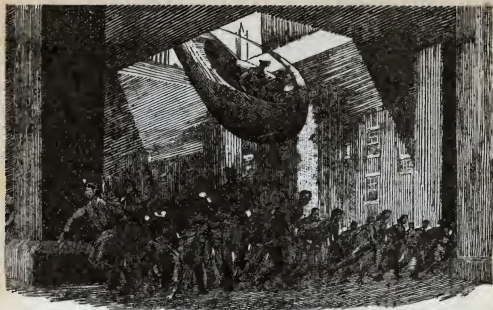
*Cover by Van Dongen*

**YOUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE ON SALE**  
--- FRIDAY, MARCH 20th ---

ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION. The editorial contents of this magazine have not been published before in Great Britain; they are protected by copyright, and cannot be reprinted without the publishers' permission. All stories are fiction. No manuscripts or artwork can be accepted.

No actual persons are designated by name or character and any similarity is coincidental.

Published every month by ATLAS PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTING CO. LTD., 18 Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4, by arrangement with Street & Smith Publications Inc., 575 Madison Avenue, New York 22, New York, U.S.A. Copyright, 1949, in U.S.A. and Great Britain by Street & Smith Publications Inc. Annual Subscription 10s. 6d. post free. *Sole Trade Distributors:* THE MAGAZINE COMPANY, 18 Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. *Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand:* GORDON & GOTCH (AUSTRALASIA) LTD.



# THE CURRENTS OF SPACE

By ISAAC ASIMOV

*FIRST OF THREE PARTS. One man knew—and his mind had been wiped clean. He had believed. One man remembered—and didn't believe. And a world of savage contrasts of luxury and harshness lay in the path of Something!*

The man from Earth came to a decision. It had been slow in coming and developing, but it was here.

It had been weeks since he had felt the comforting deck of his ship and the cool, dark blanket of space about it. Originally, he had intended a quick report to the local office of the Interstellar Spatioanalytic Bureau and a quicker retreat to space. Instead, he had been held here.

It was almost like a prison.

He drained his tea and looked at the man across the table. He said, "I'm not staying any longer."

The other man came to a decision. It had been slow in coming and developing, but it was here. He would need time, much more time. The response to the first letters had been nil. They might have fallen into a star for all they had accomplished.

That had been no more than he had expected, or, rather, no less. But it was only the first move.

It was certain that while future moves developed, he could not allow the man from Earth to squirm out of reach. He fingered the smooth black rod in his pocket.

He said, "You don't appreciate the delicacy of the problem."

The Earthman said, "What's delicate about the destruction of a planet? I want to broadcast the details to all of Sark; to everyone on the planet."

"We can't do that. You know it would mean panic."

"You said at first you would do it."

"I've thought it over and it just isn't practical."

The Earthman turned to a second

grievance. "The representative of the I.S.B. hasn't arrived."

"I know it. They are busy organizing proper procedures for this crisis. Another day or two."

"Another day or two! It's always another day or two! Are they so busy they can't spare me a moment? They haven't even seen my calculations."

"I have offered to bring it to them. You don't want me to."

"Right. They can come to me or I can go to them." He added violently, "I don't think you believe me. You don't believe Florina will be destroyed."

"I believe you."

"You don't. I know you don't. I see you don't. You're humoring me. You can't understand my data. You're not a spatio-analyst. I don't think you're even who you say you are. Who are you?"

"You're getting excited."

"Yes, I am. Is that surprising? Or are you just thinking, Poor devil, space has him. You think I'm crazy."

"Nonsense."

"Sure you do. That's why I want to see the I.S.B. They'll know if I'm crazy or not. They'll know."

The other man remembered his decision. He said, "Now you're not feeling well. I'm going to help you."

"No, you're not," shouted the Earthman, hysterically, "because I'm going to walk out. If you want to stop me, kill me, except that you won't dare. The blood of a whole world of people will be on your hands if you do."

The other man began shouting, too, to make himself heard. "I won't kill you. Listen to me, I won't kill you. There's no need to kill you."

The Earthman said, "You'll tie me up. You'll keep me here. Is that what you're thinking? And what will you do when the I.S.B. starts looking for me? I'm supposed to send in regular reports, you know."

"The Bureau knows you're with me."

"Do they? I wonder if they know I've reached the planet at all? I wonder if they received my original message." The Earthman was giddy. His limbs felt stiff.

The other man stood up. It was obvious to him that his decision had come none too soon. He walked slowly about the long table, toward the Earthman.

He said, soothingly, "It will be for your own good." He took the black rod from his pocket.

The Earthman croaked. "that's a psycho

probe." His words were slurred and when he tried to rise, his arms and legs barely quivered.

He said, between teeth that were clenching in rigor, "Drugged!"

"Drugged!" agreed the other man. "Now, look, I won't hurt you. It's difficult to understand the true delicacy of the matter while you're so excited and anxious about it. I'll just remove the anxiety. Only the anxiety."

The Earthman could no longer talk. He could only sit there. He could only think numbly, I've been drugged. He wanted to shout and scream and run, but he couldn't.

The other had reached the Earthman now. He stood there, looking down at him. The Earthman looked up. His eyeballs could still move.

The psycho probe was a self-contained unit. Its wires needed only to be fixed to the appropriate places on the skull. The Earthman watched in panic until his eye muscles froze. He did not feel the fine sting as the sharp, thin leads probed through skin and flesh to make contact with the sutures of his skull bones.

He yelled and yelled in the silence of his mind. He cried. No, you don't understand. It's a planet full of people. Don't you see that you can't take chances with hundreds of millions of living people.

The other man's words were dim and receding, heard from the other end of a long, windy tunnel. "It won't hurt you. In another hour, you'll feel well, really well. You'll be laughing at all this with me."

The Earthman felt the thin vibration against his skull and then that faded, too.

Darkness thickened and collapsed about him. Some of it never lifted again. It took a year for even parts of it to lift.

## CHAPTER I.

RIK put down his feeder and jumped to his feet. He was trembling so hard he had to lean against the bare, milk-white wall.

He shouted, "I remember!"

They looked at him and the gritty mumble of men at lunch died somewhat. Eyes met his out of faces indifferently clean and indifferently shaven, glistening and white in the imperfect wall-illumination. The eyes reflected no great interest, merely the reflex attention enforced by any sudden and unexpected cry.



Rik cried again, "I remember my job. I had a job!"

Someone called, "Shoddop!" and someone yelled, "Siddown!"

The faces turned away, the mumble rose again. Rik stared blankly along the table. He heard the remark, "Crazy Rik," and a shrug of shoulders. He saw a finger spiral at a man's temple. It all meant nothing to him. None of it reached his mind.

Slowly, he sat down. Again he clutched his feeder, a spoonlike affair, with sharp edges and little tines projecting from the front curve of the bowl, which could therefore with equal clumsiness, cut, scoop and impale. It was enough for a mill worker. He turned it over and stared without seeing at his number on the back of the handle. He didn't have to see it. He knew it by heart. All the others had registration numbers, just as he had, but the others had names also. He didn't. They called him Rik because it meant something like "moron" in the slang of the *kyrt* mills. And lately, they were getting into the habit of calling him "Crazy Rik."

But perhaps he would be remembering more and more now. This was the first time since he had come to the mill that he remembered anything at all from before the beginning. If he thought hard! If he thought with all his mind!

All at once he wasn't hungry; he wasn't the least hungry. With a sudden gesture, he thrust his feeder into the jellied briquet of meat and vegetables before him, pushed the food away, and buried his eyes in the heels of his palms. His fingers thrust and clutched at his hair and painstakingly he tried to follow his mind into the pitch from which it had extracted a single item—one muddy, undecipherable item.

Then he burst into tears, just as the clanging bell announced the end of his lunch shift.

Valona March fell in beside him when he left the mill that evening. He was scarcely conscious of her at first, at least as an individual. It was only that he heard his footsteps matched. He stopped and looked at her. Her hair was something between blonde and brown. She wore it in two thick plaits that she clamped together with little magnetized green-stoned pins. They were very cheap pins and had a faded look about them. She wore the simple cotton dress which was all that was needed in that mild climate, just as Rik himself

needed only an open, sleeveless shirt and cotton slacks.

She said, "I heard something went wrong lunch time."

She spoke in the sharp, peasant accents one would expect. Rik's own language was full of flat vowels and had a nasal touch. They laughed at him because of it and imitated his way of speaking, but Valona would tell him that that was only their own ignorance.

Rik mumbled, "Nothing's wrong, Lona."

She persisted. "I heard you said you remembered something. Is that right, Rik?"

She called him Rik, too. There wasn't anything else to call him. He couldn't remember his real name. He had tried desperately enough. Valona had tried with him. One day she had obtained a torn city directory somehow and had read all the first names to him. Not one had seemed more familiar than another.

He looked her full in the face and said, "I'll have to quit the mill."

Valona frowned. Her round, broad face with its flat, high cheekbones was troubled. "I don't think you can. It wouldn't be right."

"I've got to find out more about myself."

Valona licked her lips. "I don't think you should."

Rik turned away. He knew her concern to be sincere. She had obtained the mill job for him in the first place. He had had no experience with mill machinery. Or perhaps he had, but just didn't remember. In any case, Lona had insisted that he was too small for manual labor and they had agreed to give him technical training without charge. Before that, in the nightmarish days when he could scarcely make sounds and when he didn't know what food was for, she had watched him and fed him. She had kept him alive.

He said, "I've got to."

"Is it the headaches again, Rik?"

"No. I really remember something. I remember what my job was before—*Before!*"

He wasn't sure he wanted to tell her. He looked away. The warm, pleasant sun was at least two hours above the horizon. The monotonous rows of workers' cubicles that stretched out and round the mills were tiresome to look at, but Rik knew that as soon as they topped the rise, the fields would lie before them in all the beauty of crimson and gold.

He liked to look at the fields. From the very first, the sight had soothed and pleased him. Even before he knew that the colors

were crimson and gold, before he knew that there were such things as colors, before he could express his pleasure in anything more than a soft gurgle, the headaches would flicker away faster in the fields. In those days, Valona would borrow a diamagnetic scooter and take him out of the village every idle day. They would skim along, a foot above the road, gliding on the cushioned smoothness of the counter-gravity field, until they were miles and miles away from any human habitation and there would be left only the wind against his face, fragrant with the *kyrt* blossoms.

They would sit beside the road then, surrounded by color and scent, and between them share a food briquet, while the sun glowed down upon them until it was time to return again.

Rik was ravished by the memory. He said, "Let's go to the fields, Lona."

"It's late."

"Please. Just outside town."

She fumbled at the thin money pouch she kept between herself and the soft, blue-leather belt she wore, the only luxury of dress she allowed herself.

Rik caught her arm, "Let's walk."

They left the highway for the winding, dustless, packed-sand roads half an hour later. There was a heavy silence between them and Valona felt a familiar fear clutching at her. She had no words to express her feelings for him, so she had never tried.

What if he should leave her? He was a little fellow, no taller than herself and weighing somewhat less, in fact. He was still like a helpless child in many ways. But before they had turned his mind off, he must have been an educated man—a very important educated man.

Valona had never had any education besides reading and writing and enough trade-school technology to be able to handle mill machinery, but she knew enough to know that all people were not so limited. There was the Townman, of course, whose great knowledge was so helpful to all of them. Occasionally, Squires came on inspection tours and once, on a holiday, she had visited the city and seen a group of incredibly gorgeous creatures at a distance. Occasionally, the mill workers were allowed to listen to what educated people sounded like. They spoke differently, more fluently, with longer words and softer tones. Rik talked like that more and more as his memory improved.

She had been frightened at his first words,

They came so suddenly after long whimpering over a headache. They were pronounced queerly. When she tried to correct him, he wouldn't change.

Even then, she had been afraid that he might remember too much and then leave her. She was only Valona March. They called her Big Lona. She had never married. She never would. A large, big-footed girl with work-reddened hands like herself could never marry. She had never been able to do more than look at the boys with dumb resentment when they ignored her at the idle day dinner festivals. She was too big to giggle and smirk at them.

She would never have a baby to cuddle and hold. The other girls did, one after the other, and she could only crowd about for a quick glimpse of something red and hairless with screwed-up eyes, fists impotently clenched, gummy mouth—

"It's your turn next Lona."

"When will you have a baby, Lona?"

She could only turn away.

But when Rik had come, he was like a baby. He had to be fed and taken care of, brought out into the sun, soothed to sleep when the headaches racked him.

The children would run after her, laughing. They would yell, "Lona's got a boy friend. Big Lona's got a crazy boy friend. Lona's boy friend is a rik."

Later on, when Rik could walk by himself—she had been as proud the day he took his first step as though he were really only one year old, instead of more like thirty-one—and stepped out, unescorted, into the village streets, they had run about him in rings, yelling their laughter and foolish ridicule in order to see a grown man cover his eyes in fear, and cringe, with nothing but whimpers to answer them. Dozens of times she had come charging out of the house, shouting at them, waving her large fists.

Even grown men feared those fists. She had felled her section head with a single wild blow the first day she had brought Rik to work at the mill because of a sniggering indecency concerning them which she overheard. The mill council fined her a week's pay for that incident, and might have sent her to the city for further trial at the Squire's court, but for the Townman's intervention and the plea that there had been provocation.

So she wanted to stop Rik's remembering. She knew she had nothing to offer him; it was selfish of her to want him to stay

mind-blank and helpless forever. It was just that no one had ever before depended upon her so utterly. It was just that she dreaded a return to loneliness.

She said, "Are you sure you remember, Rik?"

"Yes."

They stopped there in the fields, with the sun adding its reddening blaze to all that surrounded them. The mild, scented evening breeze would soon spring up, and the checkerboard irrigation canals were already beginning to purple.

He said, "I can trust my memories as they come back, Lona. You know I can. You didn't teach me to speak, for instance. I remembered the words myself. Didn't I? Didn't I?"

She said, reluctantly, "Yes."

"I even remember the times you took me out into the fields before I could speak. I keep remembering new things all the time. Yesterday, I remembered that once you caught a *kyrr* fly for me. You held it closed in your hands and made me put my eye to the space between your thumbs so that I could see it flash purple and orange in the darkness. I laughed and tried to force my hand between yours to get it, so that it flew away and left me crying after all. I didn't know it was a *kyrr* fly then, or anything about it, but it's all very clear to me now. You've never told me about that, did you, Lona?"

She shook her head.

"But it did happen, didn't it? I remember the truth, don't I?"

"Yes, Rik."

"And now I remember something about myself from before. There must have been a *before*, Lona."

There must have been. She felt the weight on her heart when she thought that. It was different before, nothing like the now they lived in. It had been on a different world. She knew that because one world he had never remembered was *kyrr*. She had to teach him the word for the most important object on all the world of Florina.

"What is it you remember?" she asked.

At this, Rik's excitement seemed suddenly to die. He hung back, "It doesn't make much sense, Lona. It's just that I had a job once, and I know what it was—at least, in a way."

"What was it?"

"I analyzed Nothing."

She turned sharply upon him, peering into his eyes. For a moment, she put the

flat of her hand upon his forehead, until he moved away irritably. She said, "You don't have a headache again, Rik, have you? You haven't had one in weeks."

"I'm all right. Don't you go bothering me."

Her eyes fell, and he added at once, "I don't mean that you bother me, Lona. It's just that I feel fine, and I don't want you to worry."

She brightened. "What does 'analyzed' mean?" He knew words she didn't. She felt very humble at the thought of how educated he must once have been.

He thought a moment, "It means . . . it means, to take apart. You know, like we would take apart a sorter to find out why the scanning beam was out of alignment."

"Oh. But Rik, how can anyone have a job analyzing anything? That's not a job."

"I didn't say I didn't analyze anything. I said I analyzed Nothing. With a capital N."

"Isn't that the same thing?" It was coming, she thought. She was beginning to sound stupid to him. Soon he would throw her off in disgust.

"No, of course not." He took a deep breath. "I'm afraid I can't explain though. That's all I remember about that. But it must have been an important job. That's the way it feels. I *couldn't* have been a criminal."

Valona winced. She should never have told him that. She had told herself it was only for his own protection that she warned him, but now she felt that it had really been to keep him bound tighter to herself.

It was when he had first begun to speak. It was so sudden it had frightened her. She hadn't even dared speak to the Townman about it. The next idle day, she had withdrawn five credits from her life hoard—there would never be a man to claim it as dowry, so that it didn't matter—and taken Rik to a city doctor. She had the name and address on a scrap of paper, but even so it took two frightening hours to find her way through the huge pillars that held the Upper City up to the sun to the proper building.

She had insisted on watching and the doctor had done all sorts of fearful things with strange instruments. When he put Rik's head between two metal objects and then made it glow like a *kyrr* fly in the night, she had jumped to her feet and tried to make him stop. He called two men who dragged her out, struggling wildly.

Half an hour afterward, the doctor came



out to her, tall and frowning. She felt uncomfortable with him because he was a Squire, even though he kept an office down in the Lower City, but his eyes were mild, even kind. He was wiping his hands on a little towel, which he tossed into a wastecan, even though it looked perfectly clean to her.

He said, "When did you meet this man?"

She had told him the circumstances cautiously, reducing it to the very barest essentials and leaving out all mention of the Townman and the Patrollers.

"Then you know nothing about him?"

She shook her head, "Nothing before that."

He said, "This man has been treated with a psycho probe. Do you know what that is?"

At first, she had shaken her head again, but then she said in a dry whisper, "Is it what they do to crazy people, doctor?"

"And to criminals. It is done to change their minds for their own good. It makes their minds healthy, or it changes the parts that make them want to steal and kill. Do you understand?"

She did. She grew brick-red and said, "Rik never stole anything or hurt anybody."

"You call him Rik?" He seemed amused.

"Now look here, how do you know what he did before you met him? It's hard to tell from the condition of his mind now. The probing was thorough and brutal. I can't say how much of his mind has been permanently removed and how much has been temporarily lost through shock. What I mean is that some of it will come back, like his speaking, as time goes on, but not all of it. He should be kept under observation."

"No, No. He's got to stay with me. I've been taking good care of him, doctor."

He frowned, and then his voice grew milder. "Well, I'm thinking of you my girl. Not all the bad may be out of his mind. You wouldn't want him to hurt you some day."

At that moment, a nurse led out Rik. She was making little sounds to quiet him, as one would an infant. Rik put a hand to his head and stared vacantly, until his eyes focussed on Valona; then he held out his hands and cried, feebly, "Lona—"

She sprang to him, and put his head on her shoulder, holding him tightly. She said to the doctor, "He wouldn't hurt me, no matter what."

The doctor said, thoughtfully, "His case

will have to be reported, of course. I don't know how he escaped from the authorities in the condition he must have been in."

"Does that mean they'll take him away, doctor?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Please, doctor, don't do that." She wrenched at the handkerchief, in which were the five gleaming pieces of credit-alloy. She said, "You can have it all, doctor. I'll take good care of him. He won't hurt anyone."

The doctor looked at the pieces in his hand, "You're a mill worker, aren't you?"

She nodded.

"How much do they pay you a week?"

"Two point eight credits."

He tossed the coins gently, brought them together in his closed palm with a tinkle of metal, then held them out to her, "Take it, girl. There's no charge."

She accepted them with wonder, "You're not going to tell anyone, doctor?"

But he said, "I'm afraid I have to. It's the law."

She had driven blindly, heavily, back to the village, clutching Rik to her desperately.

The next week on the hyper-video newscast there had been news of a doctor dying in a gyro crash during a short failure in one of the local transit power beams. The name was familiar and in her room that night she compared it with that on the scrap of paper. It was the same.

She was sad, because he had been a good man. She had received his name once long before from another worker as a Squire doctor who was good to the mill hands and had saved it for emergencies. And when the emergency had come, he had been good to her too. Yet her joy drowned the sorrow. He had not had the time to report Rik. At least, no one ever came to the village to inquire.

Later, when Rik's understanding had grown, she had told him what the doctor had said so that he would stay in the village and be safe.

Rik was shaking her and she left her reveries.

He said, "Don't you hear me? I couldn't be a criminal if I had an important job."

"Couldn't you have done wrong?" she began hesitantly. "Even if you were a big man, you might have. Even Squires—"

"I'm sure I haven't. But don't you see that I've got to find out so that others can be sure? There's no other way. I've got to

leave the mill and the village and find out more about myself."

She felt the panic rise. "Rik! That would be dangerous. Why should you? Even if you analyzed Nothing why is it so important to find out more about it?"

"Because of the other thing I remember."

"What other thing?"

He whispered, "I don't want to tell you."

"You ought to tell somebody. You might forget again."

He seized her arm. "That's right. You won't tell anyone else, will you, Lona? You'll just be my spare memory in case I forget."

"Sure, Rik."

Rik looked about him. The world was very beautiful. Valona once told him that there was a huge shining sign in the Upper City, miles above it even, that said: "Of all the Planets in the Galaxy, Florina is the Most Beautiful."

And as he looked about him, he could believe it.

He said, "It is a terrible thing to remember, but I always remember correctly, when I do remember. It came this afternoon."

"Yes?"

He was staring at her in horror. "Everybody in the world is going to die. Everybody on Florina."

## CHAPTER II.

MYRLYN TERENS was in the act of removing a book film from its place on the shelf when the door signal sounded. The rather pudgy outlines of his face had been set in lines of thought, but now these vanished and changed into the more usual expression of bland caution. He brushed one hand over his thinning, ruddy hair and shouted, "One minute."

He replaced the film and pressed the contact that allowed the covering-section to spring back into place and become indistinguishable from the rest of the wall. To the simple mill workers and farm hands he dealt with, it was a matter of vague pride that one of their own number, by birth at any rate, should own films. It lightened, by tenuous reflection, the unrelieved dusk of their own minds. And yet it would not do to display the films openly.

The sight of them would have spoiled things. It would have frozen their none-too-articulate tongues. They might boast of their Townman's books, but the actual pre-

sence of them before their eyes would have made Terens seem too much the Squire.

There were, of course, the Squires as well. It was unlikely in the extreme that any of them would visit him socially at his house, but should one of them enter, a row of films in sight would be injudicious. He was a Townman and custom gave him certain privileges but it would never do to flaunt them.

He shouted again, "I'm coming!"

This time he stepped to the door, closing the upper seam of his tunic as he went. Even his clothing was somewhat Squirelike. Sometimes he almost forgot he had been born on Florina.

Valona March was on the doorstep. She bent her knees and ducked her head in respectful greeting.

Terens threw the door wide. "Come in, Valona. Sit down. Surely it's past curfew. I hope the Patrollers didn't see you."

"I don't think so, Townman."

"Well, let's hope that's so. You've got a bad record, you know."

"Yes, Townman. I am very grateful for what you have done for me in the past."

"Never mind. Here, sit down. Would you like something to eat or drink?"

She seated herself, straight-backed, at the edge of a chair and shook her head. "No, thank you, Townman. I have eaten."

It was good form among the villagers to offer refreshment. It was bad form to accept. Terens knew that. He didn't press her.

He said, "Now what's the trouble, Valona? Rik again?"

Valona nodded, but seemed at a loss for further explanation.

Terens said, "Is he in trouble at the mill?"

"No, Townman."

"Headaches again?"

"No, Townman."

Terens waited, his light eyes narrowing and growing sharp. "Well, Valona, you don't expect me to guess your trouble, do you? Come, speak out or I can't help you. You do want help, I suppose."

She said, "Yes, Townman." Then burst out, "How shall I tell you Townman? It sounds almost crazy."

Terens had an impulse to pat her shoulder, but he knew she would shrink from the touch. She sat, as usual, with her large hands buried as far as might be in her dress. He noticed that her blunt, strong fingers were intertwined and slowly twisting.

He said, "Whatever it is, I will listen."

"Do you remember, Townman, when I came to tell you about the City doctor and what he said?"

"Yes I do, Valona. And I remember I told you particularly that you were never to do anything like that again without consulting me. Do you remember that?"

She opened her eyes wide. She needed no spur to recollect his anger. "I would never do such a thing again, Townman. It's just that I want to remind you that you said you would do everything to help me keep Rik."

"And so I will. Well, then, have the Patrollers been asking about him?"

"No. Oh, Townman, do you think they might?"

"I'm sure they won't. He was losing patience. 'Now, come, Valona, tell me what is wrong?'"

Her eyes clouded. "Townman, he says he will leave me. I want you to stop him."

"Why does he want to leave you?"

"He says he is remembering things."

Interest leaped into Terens' face. He leaned forward and he almost reached out to grip her hand. "Remembering things? What things?"

Terens remembered the day Rik had first been found. He had seen the youngsters clustered near one of the irrigation ditches just outside the village. They had raised their shrill voices to call him.

"Townman! Townman!"

He had broken into a run. "What's the matter, Rasie?" He had made it his business to learn the youngsters' names when he came to town. That went well with the mothers and made the first month or two easier.

Rasie was looking sick. He said, "Lookie here, Townman."

He was pointing at something white and squirming, and it was Rik. The other boys were yelling at once in confused explanation. Terens managed to understand that they were playing some game that involved running, hiding, and pursuing. They were intent on telling him the name of the game, its progress, the point at which they had been interrupted, with a slight subsidiary argument as to exactly which individual or side was "winning." All that didn't matter, of course.

Rasie, the twelve-year-old black-haired one, had heard the whimpering and had approached cautiously. He had expected an animal, perhaps a field rat that would make good chasing. He had found Rik.

All the boys were caught between an obvious sickness and an equally obvious fascination at the strange sight. It was a grown human being, nearly naked, chin wet with drool, whimpering and crying feebly, arms and legs moving about aimlessly. Faded blue eyes shifted in random fashion out of a face that was covered with a brown stubble. For a moment, the eyes caught those of Terens and seemed to focus. Slowly, the man's thumb came up and inserted itself into his mouth.

One of the children laughed. "Looka him, Townman. He's finger-sucking."

The sudden shout jarred the prone figure. His face reddened and screwed up. A weak whining, unaccompanied by tears, sounded but his thumb remained where it was. It showed wet and pink in contrast to the rest of the dirt-smeared hand.

Terens broke his own numbness at the sight. He said, "All right, look, fellows, you shouldn't be running around here in the *kyrt* field. You're damaging the crop and you know what that will mean if the farm hands catch you. Get going, and keep quiet about this. And listen, Rasie, you run to Mr. Jencus and get him to come here."

Ull Jencus was the nearest thing to a doctor the town had. He had passed some time as apprentice in the offices of a real doctor in the city and on the strength of it he was relieved of duty on the farms or in the mills. It didn't work out too badly. He could take temperatures, administer pills, give injections and, most important, he could tell when some disorder was sufficiently serious to warrant a trip to the city hospital. Without such semiprofessional backing, those unfortunates stricken with spinal meningitis or acute appendicitis might suffer intensively but usually not for long. As it was, the foremen muttered and accused Jencus in everything but words of being an accessory after the fact to a conspiracy of malingering.

Jencus helped Terens lift the man into a scooter cart and, as unobtrusively as they might, carried him into town.

Together they washed off the accumulated and hardened grime and filth. There was nothing to be done about the hair. Jencus shaved it, and did what he could by way of physical examination.

Jencus said, "No infection I c'n tell of, Townman. He's been fed. Ribs don't stick out too much. I don't know what to make of it. How'd he get out there, d'you suppose, Townman?"

He asked the question with a pessimistic tone as though no one could expect Terens to have the answer to anything. Terens accepted that philosophically. When a village has lost the Townman it has grown accustomed to over a period of nearly fifty years, a newcomer of tender age must expect a transition period of suspicion and distrust. There was nothing personal in it.

Terens said, "I'm afraid I don't know."

"Can't walk, y'know. Can't walk a step. He'd have to be put there. Near's I c'n make out, he might's well be a baby. Everything else seems t'be gone."

"Is there a disease that has this effect?"

"Not's I know of. Mind trouble might do it, but I don't know nothing 'tall about that. Mind trouble I'd send to the city. Y'ever see this one, Townman?"

Terens smiled and said gently, "I've been here just a month."

Jencus sighed and reached for his handkerchief. "Yes. Old Townman, he was a fine man. Kept us well, he did. I been here 'most sixty years, and never saw this fella before. Must be from 'nother town."

Jencus was a plump man. He had the look of having been born plump, and if to this natural tendency is added the effect of a largely sedentary life, it is not surprising that he tended to punctuate even short speeches by a puff and a rather futile swipe at his gleaming forehead with his large red handkerchief.

He said, "Don't 'xactly know what t'say t'the Patrollers."

The Patrollers came all right. It was impossible to avoid that. The boys told their parents; their parents told one another. Town life was quiet enough. Even this would be unusual enough to be worth telling in every possible combination of informer and informee. And in all the telling, the Patrollers could not help but hear.

The Patrollers, so-called, were members of the Florinian Patrol. They were not natives of Florina and, on the other hand, they were not countrymen of the Squires from the planet Sark. They were simply mercenaries who could be counted on to keep order for the sake of the pay they got and never to be led into the misguidance of sympathy for Florinians through any ties of blood or birth.

There were two of them and one of the foremen from the mill came with them, in the fullness of his own midget authority.

The Patrollers were bored and indifferent.

A mindless idiot might be part of the day's work but it was scarcely an exciting part. One said to the foreman, "Well, how long does it take you to make an identification? Who is this man?"

The foreman shook his head energetically. "I never saw him, officer. He's no one around here."

The Patroller turned to Jencus. "Any papers on him?"

"No, sir. He just had a rag 'bout him. Burned it t'prevent infection."

"What's wrong with him?"

"No mind, near's I c'n make out."

At this point, Terens took the Patrollers aside. Because they were bored, they were amenable. The Patroller who had been asking the questions put up his notebook and said, "All right, it isn't even worth making a record of. It has nothing to do with us. Get rid of it somehow."

Then they left.

The foreman remained. He was a freckled man, red of hair, with a large and bristly mustache. He had been foreman of rigid principles for five years and that meant his responsibility for the fulfillment of quota in his mill rested heavily upon him.

"Look here," he said, fiercely, "what's to be done about this? The folk are so busy talking, they ain't working."

"Send him t'city hospital, near's I c'n make out," said Jencus, wielding his handkerchief industriously. "Noth'n' I c'n do."

"To the city!" The foreman was aghast. "Who's going to pay? Who'll stand the fees? He ain't none of us, is he?"

"Not's far's I know," admitted Jencus.

"Then why should we pay? Find out who he belongs to. Let his town pay."

"How we going t'find out? Tell me that."

The foreman considered. His tongue licked out and played with the coarse reddish foliage of his upper lip. He said, "Then we'll just have to get rid of him. Like the Patroller said."

Terens interrupted. "Look here. What do you mean by that?"

The foreman said, "He might as well be dead. It would be a mercy."

Terens said, "You can't kill a living person."

"Suppose you tell me what to do then."

"Can't one of the townspeople take care of him?"

"Who'd want to? Would you?"

Terens ignored the openly insolent attitude. "I've got other work to do."

"So have all the folk. I can't have anyone

neglecting mill work to take care of this crazy thing."

Terens sighed, and said, without rancor, "Now, foreman, let's be reasonable. If you *don't* make a quota this quarter, I might suppose it's because one of your workers is taking care of this poor fellow, and I'll speak up for you to the Squires. Otherwise, I'll just say that I don't know of any reason you couldn't make quota, in case you don't make it."

The foreman glowered. The Townman had only been here a month, and already he was interfering with men who had lived in town all their lives. Still, he had a card marked with Squire's marks. It wouldn't do to stand too openly against him too long.

He said, "But who'd take him?" A horrible suspicion smote him. "I can't. I got three kids of my own and my wife ain't well."

"I didn't suggest that you should."

Terens looked out the window. Now that the Patrollers had left, the squirming, whispering crowd had gathered closer about the Townman's house. Most were youngsters, too young to be working, others were farmhands from the nearer farms. A few were mill workers, away from their shifts.

Terens saw the big girl at the very edge of the crowd. He had noticed her often in the past month. Strong, competent, and hardworking. Good natural intelligence hidden under that unhappy expression. If she were a man, she might have been chosen for Townman's training. But she was a woman; parents dead, and plain enough to preclude romantic side-interests. A lone woman, in other words, and likely to remain so.

He said, "What about her?"

The foreman looked, then roared, "She ought to be at work."

"All right," soothed Terens. "What's her name?"

"That's Valona March."

"That's right. I remember now. Call her in."

From that moment, Terens made himself an unofficial guardian of the maid. He did what he could to obtain additional food rations for her, extra clothing coupons and whatever else was required to allow two adults—one unregistered—to live on the income of one. He was instrumental in helping her obtain training for Rik at the *kyri* mills. He intervened to prevent greater punishment on the occasion of Valona's quarrel with a section head. The death of

the city doctor made it unnecessary for him to attempt further action there than he had taken, but he had been ready.

It was natural for Valona to come to him in all her troubles, and he was waiting now for her to answer his question.

Valona was still hesitating. Finally, she said, "He says everyone in the world will die."

Terens looked startled. "Does he say how?"

"He says he doesn't know how. He just says he remembers that from before he was like . . . you know, like he is. And he says he remembers he had an important job, but I don't understand what it is."

"How does he describe it?"

"He says he an . . . analyzes Nothing with a capital N."

Valona waited for comment, then hastened to explain. "Aanalyze means taking something apart like—"

"I know what it means, girl." Terens remained lost.

Valona watched him anxiously. "Do you know what he means, Townman?"

"Perhaps, Valona."

"But Townman, how can anyone do anything to Nothing?"

Terens got to his feet. He smiled briefly. "Why, Valona, don't you know that everything in all the galaxy is mostly Nothing?"

No light of understanding dawned on Valona, but she accepted that. The Townman was a very educated man. With an unexpected twinge of pride she was suddenly certain that her Rik was even more educated.

"Come." Terens was holding his hand out to her.

She said, "Where are we going?"

"Well, where's Rik?"

"Home," she said. "Sleeping."

"Good. I'll take you there. Do you want the Patrollers to find you on the street alone?"

The village seemed empty of life in the night-time. The lights along the single street that split the area of workers' cabins in two gleamed without glare. There was a hint of rain in the air, but only of that light warm rain that fell almost every night. There was no need to take special precautions against it.

Valona had never been out so late on a working evening and it was frightening. She tried to shrink away from the sound of her own footsteps, while listening for the possible distant step of the Patrollers.



Terens said, "Stop trying to tiptoe, Valona. I'm with you."

His voice boomed in the quiet and Valona jumped. She hurried forward in response to his urging.

Valona's hut was as dark as the rest and they stepped in gingerly. Terens had been born and brought up in just such a hut and though he had since lived on Sark and now occupied a house with three rooms and plumbing, there was still something of a nostalgia about the barrenness of its interior. One room was all that we required, a bed, a chest of drawers, two chairs, a smooth poured-cement floor, a closet in one corner.

There was no need for kitchen facilities, since all meals were eaten at the mill, nor for a bathroom, since a line of community outhouses and shower cells ran along the space behind the houses. In the mild, unvarying climate, windows were not adapted for protection against cold and rain. All four walls were pierced by screened openings and eaves above were sufficient ward against the nightly windless sprinkles.

Terens noted in the flare of a little pocket light which he held cupped in one palm, that one corner of the room was marked off by a battered screen. He remembered getting it for Valona rather recently when Rik became too little of a child or too much of a man. He could hear the regular breathing of sleep behind it.

He nodded his head in that direction. "Wake him, Valona."

Valona tapped on the screen, "Rik! Rik, baby!"

There was a little cry.

"It's only Lona," said Valona. They rounded the screen and Terens played his little light upon their own faces, then upon Rik.

Rik threw an arm up against the glare. "What's the matter?"

Terens sat down on the edge of the bed. Rik slept in the standard cottage bed, he noted. He had obtained for Valona an old, rather rickety cot at the very first, but she had reserved that for herself.

"Rik," he said, "Valona says you're beginning to remember things."

"Yes, Townman." Rik was always very humble before the Townman, who was the most important man he had ever seen. Even the mill superintendent was polite to the Townman. Rik repeated the scraps his mind had gathered during the day.

Terens said, "Have you remembered anything else since you told this to Valona?"

"Nothing else, Townman."

Terens kneaded the fingers of one hand with those of the other. "All right, Rik. Go back to sleep."

Valona followed him out of the house. She was trying hard to keep her face from twisting and the back of one rough hand slid across her eyes. "Will he have to leave me, Townman?"

Terens took her hands and said gravely, "You must be a grown woman, Valona. He will have to come with me for just a short while but I'll bring him back."

"And after that?"

"I don't know. You must understand, Valona. Right now it is the most important thing in all the world that we find out more about Rik's memories."

Valona said suddenly, "You mean everybody on Florina might die, the way he says?"

Terens' grip tightened. "Don't ever say that to anyone, Valona, or the Patrollers may take Rik away forever. I mean that."

He turned away and walked slowly and thoughtfully back to his house without really noticing that his hands were trembling. He tried futilely to sleep and after an hour of that, he adjusted the Narco-field. It was one of the few pieces of Sark he had brought with him when he first returned to Florina to become Townman. It fitted about his skull like a thin, black-felt cap. He adjusted the controls to five hours and closed contact.

He had time to adjust himself comfortably in bed before the delayed response shorted the conscious centers of his cerebrum and blanketed him into instantaneous, dreamless sleep.

### CHAPTER III.

THEY left the diamagnetic scooter in a scooter-cubby outside the City-limits. Scooters were rare in the City and Terens had no wish to attract unnecessary attention. He thought for a savage moment of those of the Upper City with their diamagnetic ground cars and antigrav gyros. But that was the Upper City. It was different.

Rik waited for Terens to lock the cubby and fingerprint-seal it. He was dressed in a new one-piece suit and felt a little uncomfortable. Somewhat reluctantly, he followed the Townman under the first of the tall bridgelike structures that supported the Upper City.

On Florina, all other cities had names, but this one was simply the "City." The workers and peasants who lived in it and around it were considered lucky by the rest of the planet. In the City, there were better doctors and hospitals, more factories and more liquor stores, even a few dribbles of very mild luxury. The inhabitants themselves were somewhat less enthusiastic. They lived in the shadow of the Upper City.

The Upper City was exactly what the name implied, for the City was double, divided rigidly by a horizontal layer of fifty square miles of cementalloy resting upon some twenty thousand steel-girdered pillars. Below in the shadow were the "natives." Above, in the sun, were the Squires. It was difficult to believe in the Upper City that the planet of its location was Florina. The population was almost exclusively Sarkite in nature together with a sprinkling of Patrollers. They were the upper class in all literalness.

Terens knew his way. He walked quickly, avoiding the stares of passersby, who surveyed his Townman clothing with a mixture of envy and resentment. Rik's shorter legs made his gait less dignified as he tried to keep up. He did not remember very much from his only other visit to the City. It seemed so different now. Then it had been cloudy. Now the sun was out, pouring through the spaced openings in the cement-alloy above to form strips of light that made the intervening space all the darker. They plunged through the bright strips in a rhythmic, almost hypnotic, fashion.

Oldsters sat on wheeled chairs in the strips, absorbing the warmth and moving as the strip moved. Sometimes they fell asleep and would remain behind in the shade, nodding in their chairs until the squeaking of the wheels when they shifted position woke them. Occasionally, mothers nearly blocked the strips with their carriaged offspring.

Terens said, "Now, Rik, stand up straight. We're going up."

He was standing before a structure that filled the space between four square-placed pillars, and from ground to Upper City.

Rik said, "I'm scared."

Rik could guess what the structure was. It was an elevator that lifted to the upper level.

These were necessary, of course. Production was below, but consumption was above. Basic chemicals and raw food staples were shipped into Lower City, but finished

plastic-ware and fine meals were matters for Upper City. Excess population spawned below; maids, gardeners, chauffeurs, construction laborers were used above.

Terens ignored Rik's expression of fright completely. He was amazed that his own heart beat so violently. Not fright, of course. Rather a fierce satisfaction that he was going up. He would step all over that sacred cementalloy, stamp on it, scuff his dirt upon it. He could do that as a Townman. Of course, he was still only a Florinian native to the Squires, but he was a Townman and he could step on the cementalloy whenever he pleased.

Galaxy, he hated them!

He stopped himself, drew a firm breath and signaled for the elevator. There was no use thinking hate. He had been on Sark for four years; on Sark itself, the center and breeding-place of the Squires. He had learned to bear in silence. He could not forget what he had learned now. Of all times, not now.

He heard the whirr of the elevator settling at the lower level, and the entire wall facing him dropped into its slot.

The native who operated the elevator looked disgusted. "Just two of you?"

"Just two," said Terens, stepping in. Rik followed.

The operator made no move to restore the fallen wall to its original position. He said, "Seems to me you guys could wait for the two o'clock load and move with it. I ain't supposed to run this thing up and down for no two guys." He spat carefully, making sure that the sputum hit lower level concrete and not the floor of his elevator.

He went on, "Where's your employment tickets?"

Terens said, "I'm a Townman. Can't you see it by my clothes?"

"Clothes don't mean nothing. Listen, you think I'm risking my job because you maybe picked up some uniform somewhere? Where's your card?"

Terens, without another word, presented the standard document-folder all natives had to carry at all times; registration number; employment certificate; tax receipts. It was open to the crimson of his Townman's license. The operator scanned it briefly.

"Well, maybe you picked that up, too, but that's not my business. You got it and I pass you, though Townman's just a fancy name for a native to my way of figgering. What about the other guy?"

"He's in my charge," said Terens. "He

can come with me, or shall we call a Patroller and check into the rules?"

It was the last thing Terens wanted but he suggested it with suitable arrogance.

"Awrrright! Y'don't have to get sore." The elevator wall moved up, and with a lurch, the elevator climbed. The operator mumbled direfully under his breath.

Terens smiled tightly. It was almost inevitable. Those who worked directly for the Squires were only too glad to identify themselves with the rulers, and make up for their real inferiority by a tighter adherence to the rules of segregation, a harsh and haughty attitude toward their fellows. They were the "upper-men" for whom the other Florinians reserved their particular hate, unalloyed by the carefully-taught awe they felt for the Squires.

The vertical distance traveled was thirty feet, but the door opened again to a new world. Like the native cities of Sark, Upper City was laid out with a particular eye to color. Individual structures, whether dwelling places or public buildings, were inset in an intricate multicolored mosaic, which, close at hand, were a meaningless jumble, but at a distance of a hundred yards took on a soft clustering of hues that melted and changed with the angle of view.

"Come on, Rik," said Terens.

Rik was staring wide-eyed. Nothing alive and growing! Just stone and color in huge masses. He had never known houses could be so huge. Something stirred momentarily in his mind. For a second, the hugeness was not so strange—And then the memory closed down again.

A ground-car flashed by.

"Are those Squires?" Rik whispered.

There had been time only for a glance. Hair close-cropped, wide, flaring sleeves of glossy, solid colors ranging from blue to violet, knickers of a velvety appearance and long, sheer hose that gleamed as if it were woven of thing copper wire. They wasted no glance at Rik and Terens.

"Young ones," said Terens. He had not seen them at such close quarters since he left Sark. On Sark they were bad enough but at least they had been in place. Angels did not fit here, thirty feet over Hell. Again he squirmed to suppress a useless tremble of hatred.

A two-man flat-car hissed up behind them. It was a new model which had built-in air controls. At the moment, it was skimming smoothly two inches above surface, its gleaming flat bottom curled upward at all

edges to cut air-resistance. Still, the slicing of air against its lower surface sufficed to produce the characteristic hiss which meant "Patrollers."

They were large, as all Patrollers were; broad-faced, flat-cheeked, long, straight black hair, light brown in complexion. To the natives, all Patrollers looked alike. The glossy black of their uniforms, enhanced as they were by the startling silver of strategically placed buckles and ornamental buttons, depressed the importance of the face and encouraged the impression of likeness still more.

One Patroller was at the controls, the other leaped out lightly over the shallow rim of the car.

He said, "Folder!" stared mechanically and momentarily at it and flipped it back at Terens. "Your business here?"

"I intend consulting the library, officer. It is my privilege."

The Patroller turned to Rik. "What about you?"

"I—," began Rik.

"He is my assistant," interposed Terens.

"He has no Townman privileges," said the Patroller.

"I'll be responsible for him."

The Patroller shrugged. "It's your lookout Townmen have privileges, but they're not Squires. Remember that, boy."

"Yes, officer. By the way, could you direct me to the library?"

The Patroller directed him, using the thin, deadly barrel of a needle-gun to indicate direction. From their present angle, the library was a blotch of brilliant vermilion deepening into crimson toward the upper stories. As they approached, the crimson crept downward.

Rik said with sudden vehemence, "I think it's ugly."

Terens gave him a quick, surprised glance. He had been accustomed to all this on Sark, but he, too, found the garishness of Upper City somewhat vulgar. But then, Upper City was more Sark than Sark itself. On Sark, not all men were aristocrats. There were even poor Sarkites, some scarcely better off than the average Florinian. Here only the top of the pyramid existed; and the library showed that.

It was larger than all but a few on Sark itself, far larger than Upper City required, which showed the advantage of cheap labor. Terens paused on the curved ramp that led to the main entrance. The color scheme on the ramp gave the illusion of steps, which

was somewhat disconcerting to Rik, who stumbled, but gave the library the proper air of archaism that traditionally accompanied academic structures.

The main hall was large, cold, and all but empty. The librarian behind the single desk it contained looked like a small, somewhat wrinkled pea in a bloated pod. She looked up and half rose.

Terens said quickly, "I'm a Townman. Special privileges. I am responsible for this native." He had his papers ready and marched them before him.

The librarian seated herself and looked stern. She plucked a metal sliver from a slot and thrust it at Terens. The Townman placed his right thumb firmly upon it. The librarian took the sliver and put it in another slot where a dim violet light shone briefly.

She said, "Room 242."

"Thank you."

The cubicles on the second floor had that icy lack of personality that any link in an endless chain would have. Some were filled, their glassite doors frosted and opaque. Most were not.

"Two forty-two," said Rik. His voice was squeaky.

"What's the matter, Rik?"

"I don't know. I feel very excited."

"Ever been in a library before?"

"I don't know."

Terens put his thumb on the round aluminum disk which, five minutes before, had been sensitized to his thumbprint. The clear glass door swung open and as they stepped within, it closed silently and, as though a blind had been drawn, became opaque.

The room was six feet in each direction, without window or adornment. It was lit by the diffuse ceiling glow and ventilated by a forced-air draft. The only contents were a desk that stretched from wall to wall and an upholstered backless bench between it and the door. On the desk were three "readers." Their frosted-glass fronts slanted backward at an angle of thirty degrees. Before each were the various control-dials.

"Do you know what this is?" Terens sat down and placed his soft, plump hand upon one of the readers.

Rik sat down, too.

"Books?" he asked, eagerly.

"Well," Terens seemed uncertain. "This is a library, so your guess doesn't mean much. Do you now how to work the reader?"

"No. I don't think so, Townman."

"You're sure? Think about it a little."

Rik tried valiantly. "I'm sorry, Townman."

"Then I'll show you. Look! First, you see, there's this knob, labeled 'Catalogue' with the alphabet printed about it. Since we want the encyclopedia first, we'll turn the knob to E and press downward."

He did so and several things happened at once. The frosted-glass flared into life and printing appeared upon it. It stood out black on yellow as the ceiling-light dimmed. Three smooth panels moved out like so many tongues, one before each reader, and each was centered by a tight light-beam.

Terens snapped a toggle switch and the panels moved back into their recesses.

He said, "We won't be taking notes."

Then he went on. "Now we can go down the list of E's by turning this knob."

The long line of alphabetized materials, titles, authors, catalogue numbers flipped upward then stopped at the packed column listing the numerous volumes of the encyclopedia.

Rik said suddenly, "You press the numbers and letters after the book you want on these little buttons and it shows on the screen."

Terens turned on him. "How do you know? Do you remember that?"

"Maybe I do. I'm not sure. It just seems the right thing."

"Well, call it an intelligent guess."

He punched a letter-number combination. The light on the glass faded, then brightened again. It said: "Encyclopedia of Sark; Volume 54, Sol-Spec."

Terens said, "Now look, Rik, I don't want to put any ideas in your head, so I won't tell you what's in my mind. I just want you to look through this volume and stop at anything that seems familiar. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now take your time."

The minutes passed till fifteen of them had come, shiny and new, to live their brief lifetime and die, when Rik gasped and sent the dials spinning backward. He was yelling incoherently.

When he stopped, Terens read the heading and looked pleased. "You remember now? This isn't a guess? You remember?"

Rik nodded vigorously. "It came to me, Townman. Very suddenly."

It was an article on spatioanalysis.

"I know what it says," Rik said. "You'll

see; you'll see." He was having difficulty breathing and Terens, for his part, was almost equally excited.

"See," said Rik, "they always have this part."

He read aloud haltingly, but in manner far more proficient than could be accounted for by the sketchy lessons in reading he had received from Valona. The article said:

"It is not surprising that the spatioanalyst is by temperament an introverted and, often enough, maladjusted individual. To devote the greater part of one's adult life to the lonely recording of the terrible emptiness between the stars is more than can be asked of someone entirely normal. It is perhaps with some realization of this that the Spatioanalytic Institute has adopted as its official slogan the somewhat wry statement, 'We Analyze Nothing.'"

Rik finished with what was almost a shriek.

Terens said, "Do you understand what you've read?"

The smaller man looked up with blazing eyes. "It said 'We Analyze Nothing.' That's what I remembered. I was one of them."

"You were a spatioanalyst?"

"Yes," cried Rik. Then, in a lower voice, "My head hurts."

"Because you're remembering?"

"I suppose so." He looked up, forehead furrowed. "I've got to remember more. There's danger. Tremendous danger! I don't know what to do."

"The library's at our disposal, Rik." Terens was watching carefully, weighing his words. "Use the catalogue yourself and look up some texts on spatioanalysis. See where that leads you."

Rik flung himself upon the reader. He was shaking visibly. Terens moved aside to give him room.

"How about Wrijt's 'Treatise of Spatioanalytical Instrumentation?'" asked Rik. "Doesn't that sound right?"

"It's all up to you, Rik."

Rik punched the catalogue number and the screen burned brightly and steadily. It said, "Please Consult Librarian for Book in Question."

Terens reached out a quick hand and neutralized the screen. "Better try another book, Rik."

"But—" Rik hesitated, then followed orders. Another search through the catalogue and then he chose Enning's "Composition of Space."

The screen filled itself once more with a

request to consult the librarian. Terens said, "Damn!" and deadened the screen again.

Rik said, "What's the matter?"

Terens said, "Nothing. Nothing. Now don't get panicky, Rik. I just don't quite see—"

There was a little speaker behind the grillwork on the side of the reading mechanism. The librarian's thin, dry voice emerged therefrom and froze them both.

"Room 242! Is there anyone in Room 242?"

Terens answered harshly, "What do you want?"

The voice said, "What book is it you want?"

"None at all. Thank you. We are only testing the reader."

There was a pause as though some invisible consultation was proceeding. Then the voice said with an even sharper edge to it, "The record indicates a reading request for Wrijt's 'Treatise of Spatioanalytical Instrumentation,' and Enning's 'Composition of Space.' Is that correct?"

"We were punching catalogue numbers at random," said Terens.

"May I ask your reason for desiring those books?" The voice was inexorable.

"I tell you we don't want them. Now stop it." The last was an angry aside to Rik, who had begun whimpering.

A pause again. Then the voice said, "If you will come down to the desk, you may have access to the books. They are on a reserved listing and you will have to fill out a form."

Terens held out a hand to Rik. "Let's go."

"Maybe we've broken a rule," quavered Rik.

"Nonsense, Rik. We're leaving."

"We won't fill out the form?"

"No, we'll get the books some other time."

Terens was hurrying, forcing Rik along with him. He strode down the main lobby. The librarian looked up.

"Here now," she cried, rising and circling the desk. "One moment. One moment!"

They weren't stopping for her.

That is, until a Patroller stepped in front of them. "You're in an awful hurry, laddies."

The librarian, somewhat breathless, caught up to them. "You're 242, aren't you?"

"Look here," said Terens, firmly, "why are we being stopped?"

"Didn't you inquire after certain books? We'd like to get them for you."



"It's too late. Another time. Don't you understand that I don't want the books. I'll be back tomorrow."

"The library," said the woman, primly, "at all times endeavors to give satisfaction. The books will be made available to you in one moment." Two spots of red burned high upon her cheekbones. She turned away, hurrying through a small door that opened at her approach.

Terens said, "Officer, if you don't mind—"

But the Patroller held out his moderately long, weighted neuronc whip. It could serve as an excellent club, or as a longer range weapon of paralyzing potentialities. He said, "Now, laddie, why don't you sit down quietly and wait for the lady to come back? It would be the polite thing to do."

The Patroller was no longer young, no longer slim. He looked close to retirement age and he was probably serving out his time in quiet vegetation as library guard, but he was armed and the joviality on his swarthy face had a synthetic look about it.

Terens' forehead was wet and he could feel the perspiration collecting at the base of his spine. Somehow, he had underestimated the situation. He had been sure of his own analysis of the matter; of everything. Yet here he was. He shouldn't have been so reckless. It was his desire to invade Upper City, to stalk through the library corridors as though he were a Sarkite.

For a desperate moment, he wanted to assault the Patroller and then, unexpectedly, he didn't have to.

It was just a flash of movement at first. The Patroller started to turn a little too late. The slower reactions of age betrayed him. The neuronc whip was wrenched from his grasp and before he could do more than emit the very beginnings of a hoarse cry, it was laid along his temple. He collapsed.

Rik shrieked with delight, and Terens cried, "Valona! By all the devils of Sark, *Valona!*"

#### CHAPTER IV.

TERENS recovered almost at once. He said, "Out. Quickly!" and began walking.

For a moment he had the impulse to drag the Patroller's unconscious body into the shadows behind the pillars that lined the main hall, but there was obviously no time.

They emerged onto the ramp, with the afternoon sun making the world bright and warm about them. The colors of Upper City had shifted to an orange motif.

Valona said, anxiously, "Come on!" but Terens caught her elbow.

He was smiling, but his voice was hard and low. He said, "Don't run. Walk naturally and follow me. Hold on to Rik. Don't let him run."

A few steps. They seemed to be moving through glue. Were there sounds behind them from the library? Imagination? Terens did not dare look.

"In here," he said. The sign above the driveway he indicated flickered a bit in the light of afternoon. It didn't compete very well with Florina's sun. It said: Ambulance Entrance.

Up the drive, through a side-entrance, and between incredibly white walls. They were blobs of foreign material against the aseptic glassiness of the corridor.

A woman in uniform was looking at them from a distance. She hesitated, frowned, began to approach. Terens did not wait for her. He turned sharply, followed a branch of the corridor, then another one. They passed others in uniform and Terens could imagine the uncertainty they aroused. It was quite unprecedented to have natives wandering about unguarded in the upper levels of a hospital. What did one do?

Eventually, of course, they would be stopped.

So Terens felt his heartbeat step up when he saw the unobstrusive door that said: To Native Levels. The elevator was at their level. He herded Rik and Valona within and the soft lurch as the elevator dropped was the most delightful sensation of the day.

There were three kinds of buildings in the City. Most were Lower Buildings, built entirely on the lower level: Worker's houses, ranging up to three stories in height; factories; bakeries; disposal plants. Others were Upper Buildings: Sarkite homes, theaters, the library, sports arenas. But some few were Doubles, with levels and entrances both below and above; the Patroller stations, for instance, and the hospitals.

One could therefore use a hospital to go from Upper City to Lower City and avoid in that manner the use of the large freight elevators with their slow movements and over-attentive operators. For a native to do so was thoroughly illegal, of course, but the added crime was a pinprick to those already guilty of assaulting Patrollers.

They stepped out upon the lower level. The stark aseptic walls were there still, but they had a faintly haggard appearance as though they were less often scrubbed. The upholstered benches that lined the corridors

on the upper level were gone. Most of all there was an uneasy babble of a waiting room filled with wary men and frightened women. A single attendant was attempting to make sense out of the mess, and succeeding poorly.

She was snapping at a stubbled oldster who pleaded and unpleated the wrinkled knee of his raveling trousers and who answered all questions in an apologetic monotone.

"Exactly what is your complaint? How long have you had these pains? Ever been to the hospital before? Now look, you people can't expect to bother us over every little thing. You sit down and the doctor will look at you and give you more medicine."

She cried, shrilly, "Next!" then muttered something to herself as she looked at the large timepiece on the wall.

Terens, Valona, and Rik were edging cautiously through the crowd. Valona as though the presence of fellow-Florinians had freed her tongue of paralysis was whispering intensely.

"I had to come, Townman. I was so worried about Rik. I thought you wouldn't bring him back and—"

"How did you get to the Upper City, anyway?" demanded Terens over his shoulder, as he sidled unresisting natives to either side.

"I followed you and saw you go up the freight elevator. When it came down I said I was with you and he took me up."

"Just like that."

"I shook him a little."

"Imps of Sark," groaned Terens.

"I had to," explained Valona, miserably. "Then I saw the Patrollers pointing out a building to you. I waited till they were gone and went there, too. Only I didn't dare go inside. I didn't know what to do so I sort of hid until I saw you coming out with the Patroller stopping—"

"You people there!" It was the sharp, impatient voice of the receptionist. She was standing now, and the hard rapping of her metal stylus on the cementalloy desk top dominated the gathering and reduced them to a hard-breathing silence.

"Those people trying to leave. Come here. You cannot leave without being examined. There'll be no evading work days with pretended sick calls. Come back here!" Her voice lifted in amplitude and pitch.

But the three were out in the half shadow of Lower City. There were the smells and

noise of what the Sarkites called the Native Quarter about them and the upper level was once more only a roof above them. But however relieved Valona and Rik might feel at being away from the oppressive richness of Sarkite surroundings, Terens felt no lifting of anxiety. They had gone too far and henceforth there might be no safety anywhere.

That thought was still passing through his turbulent mind when Rik called, "Look!"

Terens felt salt in his throat.

It was perhaps the most frightening sight the natives of the Lower City could see. It was like a giant bird floating down through one of the openings in the Upper City. It shut off the sun and deepened the ominous gloom of that portion of the City. But it wasn't a bird. It was one of the armed ground-cars of the Patrollers.

Natives yelled and began running. They might have no specific reason to fear, but they scattered anyway. One man, nearly in the path of the car, stepped aside reluctantly. He had been hurrying on his way, intent on some business of his own, when the shadow caught him. He looked about him, a rock of calm in the wildness. He was of medium height, but almost grotesquely broad across the shoulders. One of his shirt sleeves was slit down its length, revealing an arm like another man's thigh.

Terens was hesitating, and Rik and Valona could do nothing without him. The Townman's inner uncertainty had mounted to a fever. If they ran, where could they go? If they remained where they were, what could they do? There was a chance that the Patrollers were after others altogether, but with a Patroller unconscious on the library floor through their act, the chances of that were negligible.

The broad man was approaching at a heavy half-trot. For a moment, he paused in passing them, as though with uncertainty. He said, in a conversational voice, "Khorev's bakery is second left, beyond the laundry."

He veered back.

Terens said, "Come on."

He was sweating freely as he ran. Through the uproar he heard the barking orders that came naturally to Patroller throats. He threw a look, one look, over his shoulder. A half-dozen of them were piling out of the ground-car, fanning out. They would have no trouble, he knew. In his Townman's uniform, he was as conspicuous as one of the pillars supporting the Upper City.

Two of the Patrollers were running in the right direction. He didn't know if they had seen him or not, but that didn't matter. Both collided with the broad man who had just spoken to Terens. All three were close enough for Terens to hear the broad man's hoarse bellow and the Patroller's sharp cursing. Terens herded Valona and Rik around the corner.

Khorév's bakery was named as such by an almost defaced "worm" of crawling illuminated plastic, broken in half a dozen places and was made unmistakable by the wonderful odor that filtered through its open door. There was nothing to do but enter, and they did.

An old man looked out from an inner room within which they could see the flour-obscured gleam of the radar furnaces. He had no chance to ask their business.

Terens began, "A broad man—" He was holding his arms apart in illustration, and the cries of "Patrollers! Patrollers!" began to be heard outside.

The old man said, hoarsely, "This way! Quickly!"

Terens held back. "In there?"

The old man said, "This one is a dummy."

First Rik, then Valona, then Terens crawled through the furnace door. There was a faint click and the back wall of the furnace moved slightly and hung freely from hinges above. They pushed through it and into a small room, dimly-lit, beyond.

They waited. Ventilation was bad, and the smell of baking increased hunger without satisfying it. Valona kept smiling at Rik, patting his hand mechanically from time to time. Rik stared back at her blankly. Once in a while, he put a hand to his flushed face.

Valona began, "Townman—"

He snapped back a tight whisper, "Not now, Lona. Please!"

He passed the back of his hand across his forehead, then stared at the dampness on his knuckles.

There was a click, magnified by the close confinement of their hiding place. Terens stiffened. Without quite realizing it, he raised clenched fists.

It was only the broad man, poking his immense shoulders through the opening. They scarcely fitted.

He looked at Terens and was amused. "Come on, man. We're not going to be fighting."

Terens looked at his fists and let them drop.

The broad man was in markedly poorer

condition now than when they had first seen him. His shirt was all but removed from his back and a fresh weal, turning red and purple, marked one cheekbone. His eyes were little and the eyelids crowded them above and below.

"He said, 'They've stopped looking. If you're hungry, the fare here isn't fancy, but there's enough of it. What do you say?'"

It was night in the City. There were lights in the Upper City that lit the sky for miles, but in the Lower City, the darkness was clammy. The shades were drawn tightly across the front of the bakery to hide the illegal, past-curfew lights away from it.

Rik felt better with warm food inside him. His headache began to recede. He fixed his eyes on the broad man's cheek.

Timidly, he asked, "Did they hurt you, mister?"

"A little," said the broad one. "It doesn't matter. It happens every day in my business." He laughed, showing large teeth. "They had to admit I hadn't done anything but I was in their way while they were chasing someone else. The easiest way of getting a native out of the way—" His hand rose and fell, holding an invisible weapon, butt-first.

Rik flinched away and Valona reached out an anxious, protective arm.

The broad man leaned back, sucking at his teeth to get out particles of food. He said, "I'm Matt Khorov, but they just call me the Baker. Who are you people?"

Terens shrugged. "Well—"

The Baker said, "I see your point. What I don't know won't hurt anyone. Maybe. Maybe. At that, though, you might trust me. I saved you from the Patrollers, didn't I?"

"Yes. Thank you." Terens couldn't squeeze cordiality into his voice. He said, "How did you know they were after us? There were quite a few people running."

The other smiled. "None of them had the faces you three were wearing. Yours could have been ground up and used for chalk."

Terens tried to smile in return. He didn't succeed well. "I'm not sure I know why you risked your life. Thank you, anyway. It isn't much, just saying 'Thank you,' but there's nothing else I can do right now."

"You don't have to do anything." The Baker's vast shoulders leaned back against the wall. "I do this as often as I can. It's nothing personal. If the Patrollers are after



someone, I do my best for him. I hate the Patrollers."

Valona gasped. "Don't you get into trouble?"

"Sure. Look at this." He put a finger gently on his bruised cheek. "But you don't think I ought to let it stop me, I hope. That's why I built the dummy oven. So the Patrollers wouldn't catch me and make things too hard for me."

Valona's eyes were wide with mingled fright and fascination.

The Baker said, "Why not? You know how many Squires there are on Florina? Ten thousand. You know how many Patrollers? Maybe twenty thousand. And there are five hundred million of us natives. If we all lined up against them—" He snapped his fingers.

Terens said, "We'd be lining up against needle-guns and blaster cannon, Baker."

The Baker retored, "Yeah. We'd have to get some of our own. You Townmen have been living too close to the Squires. You're scared of them."

Valona's world was being turned upside down today. This man fought with Patrollers and spoke with careless self-confidence to the Townman. When Rik plucked at her sleeve, she disengaged his fingers gently and

told him to sleep. She scarcely looked at him. She wanted to hear what this man said.

The broad man was saying, "Even with needle-guns and blast cannon, the only way the Squires hold Florina is with the help of a hundred thousand Townmen. No offense."

Terens looked offended, just the same. The Baker went, "For instance, look at you. Very nice clothes. Neat. Pretty. You've got a nice little shack, too, I'll bet, with book-films, a private hopper and no curfew. You can even go to Upper City if you want to. The Squires wouldn't do that for you for nothing."

Terens felt in no position to lose his temper. He said, "All right. What do you want the Townmen to do? Pick fights with the Patrollers? What good would it do? I admit I keep my town quiet and up to quota, but I keep them out of trouble. I try to help them, as much as the law will allow. Isn't that something? Some day—"

"Aah, some day. Who can wait for some day? When you and I are dead, what difference will it make who runs Florina? To us, I mean."

Terens said, "In the first place, I hate Squires more than you do. Still—"

He stopped, reddening.



The Baker laughed. "Go ahead. Say it again. I won't turn you in for hating the Squires. What did you do to get the Patrollers after you?"

Terens was silent.

The Baker said, "I can make a guess. When the Patrollers fell over me, they were plenty sore. Sore in person, I mean, and not just because some Squire told them to be sore. I know them and I can tell. So I figure that there's only one thing that could have happened. You must've knocked down a Patroller. Or killed him, maybe."

Terens was still silent.

The Baker lost none of his agreeable tone. "It's all right to keep quiet. There's such a thing as being too cautious, Townman. You're going to need help. They know who you are."

"No, they don't," said Terens, hastily.

"They must have looked at your cards in the Upper City."

"Who said I was in the Upper City?"

"A guess. I'll bet you were."

"They looked at my card, but not long enough to read my name."

"Long enough to know you're a Townman. All they have to do is find a Townman missing from his town or one who can't account for his movements today. The

wires all over Florina are probably scorching right now. I think you're in trouble."

"Maybe."

"You know there's no maybe. Want help?"

They were talking in whispers. Rik had curled up in the corner and gone to sleep. Valona's eyes were moving from speaker to speaker.

Terens shook his head. "No, thanks. I . . . I'll get out of this."

The Baker's ready laughter came. "It will be interesting to see how. Don't look down on me because I haven't got an education. I've got other things. Look, you spend the night thinking about it. Maybe you'll decide you can use help."

Valona's eyes were open in the darkness. Her bed was only a blanket thrown on the floor, but it was nearly as good as the beds she was used to. Rik slept deeply on another blanket in a opposite corner. He always slept deeply on days of excitement after his headaches passed.

The Townman had refused a bed and the Baker had laughed—he laughed at everything, it seemed—turned out the light and told him he was welcome to sit up in the darkness.

Valona's eyes remained open. Sleep was far away. Would she ever sleep again? She had knocked down a Patroller!

Unaccountably, she was thinking of her father and mother.

They were very misty in her mind. She had almost made herself forget them in the years that had stretched between them and herself. But now she remembered the sound of whispered conversations during the night, when they thought her asleep. She remembered people who came in the dark.

The Patrollers had awakened her one night and asked her questions she could not understand, but tried to answer. She never saw her parents again after that. They had gone away, she was told, and the next day they had put her to work when other children her age still had two years of playtime. People looked after her as she passed and other children weren't allowed to play with her, even when work time was over. She learned to keep to herself. She learned not to speak. So they called her "Big Lona" and laughed at her and said she was a half-wit.

Why did the conversation tonight remind her of her parents?

"Valona."

The voice was so close that its light breath stirred her hair and so low she scarcely



heard it. She tensed under her light blanket, partly in fear, partly in embarrassment. There was only a sheet over her bare body.

It was the Townman. He said, "Don't say anything. Just listen. I am leaving. The door isn't locked. I'll be back, though. Do you hear me? Do you understand?"

She reached in the darkness, caught his hand, pressed it with her fingers. He was satisfied.

"And watch Rik. Don't let him out of your sight. And Valona." There was a long pause. Then he went on, "Don't trust this Baker too much. I don't know about him. Do you understand?"

There was a faint noise of motion, an even fainter distant creak, and he was gone. She raised herself to one elbow and except for Rik's breathing and her own, there was only silence.

She put her eyelids together in the darkness, squeezing them, trying to think. Why did the Townman, who knew everything, say this about the Baker, who hated Patrollers and had saved them. Why?

She could only think of one thing. He had been there. Just when things looked as black as they could be, the Baker had come and had acted quickly. It was almost as though it had been arranged or as if the Baker had been waiting for it all to happen.

She shook her head. It sounded strange. If it wasn't for what the Townman had said, she would never think this.

The silence was broken into quivering pieces by a loud and unconcerned remark. "Hello? Still here?"

She froze as a beam of light caught her full. Slowly, she relaxed and bunched the sheet about her neck. The beam fell away.

She did not have to wonder about the identity of the new speaker. His squat broad form bulked in the half-light that leaked backward from the flash.

The Baker said, "You know, I thought you'd go with him."

Valona said, weakly, "Who, sir?"

"The Townman. You knew he left, girl. Don't waste time pretending."

"He'll be back, sir."

"Did he say he would be back? If he did, he's wrong. The Patrollers will get him. He's not a very smart man, the Townman, or he'd know when a door is left open for purpose. Are you planning to leave, too?"

Valona said, "I'll wait for the Townman."

"Suit yourself. It will be a long wait. Go when you please."

His light-beam suddenly left her altogether

and traveled along the floor, picking out Rik's pale, thin face. Rik's eyelids crushed together automatically, at the impact of the light, but he slept on.

The Baker's voice grew thoughtful. "But I'd just as soon you left that one behind. You understand that, I suppose. If you decide to leave, the door is open, but it isn't open for *him*."

"He's just a poor, sick fellow—" Valona began, in a high, frightened voice.

"Yes? Well, I collect poor sick fellows and that one stays here. Remember!"

The light-beam did not move from Rik's sleeping face.

## CHAPTER V.

DR. SELIM JUNZ had been impatient for a year, but one does not become accustomed to impatience with time. Rather the reverse. Nevertheless the year had taught him that the Sarkite Civil Service could not be hurried; all the more so since the civil servants themselves were largely transplanted Florinians and therefore dreadfully careful of their own dignity.

He had once asked old Abel, the Transtorian ambassador who had lived on Sark so long that the soles of his boots had grown roots, why the Sarkites allowed their government departments to be run by the very people they despised so heartily.

Abel had wrinkled his eyes over a goblet of green wine.

"Policy, Junz," he said. "Policy. A matter of practical genetics, look you, carried out with Sarkite logic. They're a small, no-account world, these Sarkites, in themselves and are only important, look you, so long as they control that everlasting gold mine, Florina. So each year they skim Florina's fields and villages, bringing the cream of its youth to Sark for training. The mediocre ones they set to filing their papers and filling their blanks and signing their forms and the really clever ones they send back to Florina to act as native governors for the towns. Townmen they call them."

Dr. Junz was a spatioanalyst, primarily. He did not quite see the point of all this. He said so.

Abel pointed a blunt old forefinger at him and the green light shining through the contents of his goblet touched the ridged fingernail and subdued its yellow-grayness.

He said, "You will never make an administrator. Ask me for no recommendations. Look you, the most intelligent clements of

Florina are won over to the Sarkite cause wholeheartedly, since while they serve Sark, they are well taken care of, whereas if they turn their back on Sark the best they can hope for is a return to a Florinian existence, which is not good, look you, not good."

He swallowed the wine at a draught, and went on, "Further, neither the Townmen nor Sark's clerical assistants may breed without losing their positions. Even with female Florinians, that is. Interbreeding with Sarkites is, of course, out of the question. In this way, the best of the Florinian genes are being continually withdrawn from circulation, so that gradually Florina will be composed only of hewers of wood and drawers of water."

"They'll run out of clerks at that rate, won't they?"

"A matter for the future."

So Dr. Junz sat now in one of the outer anterooms of the Department for Florinian Affairs and waited impatiently to be allowed past the slow barriers, while Florinian underlings scurried endlessly through a bureaucratic maze.

An elderly Florinian, shriveled in service, stood before him.

"Dr. Junz?"

"Yes."

"Come with me."

A flashing number on a screen would have been as efficient in summoning him and a fluoro-channel through the air as efficient in guiding him, but where manpower is cheap, nothing need be substituted. Dr. Junz thought "man-power" advisedly. He had never seen women in any government department on Sark. Florinian women were left on their planet, except for some house-servants who were likewise forbidden to breed, and Sarkite women were, as Abel said, out of the question.

He was gestured to a seat before the desk of the Clerk to the Undersecretary. He knew the man's title from the channeled glow etched upon the desk. No Florinian could, of course, be more than a clerk, regardless of how much of the actual threads of office ran through his white fingers. The Undersecretary and the Secretary of Florinian Affairs would themselves be Sarkites, but though Dr. Junz might meet them socially, he knew he would never meet them here in the department.

He sat, still impatiently, but at least nearer the goal. The clerk was glancing carefully through the file, turning each minutely coded sheet as though it held the

secrets of the universe. The man was quite young, a recent graduate perhaps, and like all Florinians, very fair of skin and light of hair.

Dr. Junz felt an ancient atavistic thrill. He himself came from the world of Libair and like all Libairians he was highly pigmented and his skin was a deep, rich brown. There were few worlds in the galaxy in which the skin-color was so extreme as on either Libair or Florina. Generally, intermediate shades were the rule.

Some of the radical young anthropologists were playing with the notion that men of worlds like Libair, for instance, had arisen by independent but convergent evolution. The older men denounced bitterly any notion of an evolution that converged different species to the point where interbreeding was possible, as it certainly was among all the worlds in the galaxy. They insisted that on the original planet, whatever it was, mankind was already split into subgroups of varying pigmentation.

This merely placed the problem farther back in time and answered nothing so that Dr. Junz found neither explanation satisfying. Yet even now he found himself thinking of the problem at times. Legends of a past of conflict had lingered, for some reason, on the dark worlds. Libairian myths, for instance, spoke of times of war between men of different pigmentation and the founding of Libair itself was held due to a party of browns fleeing from a defeat in battle.

When Dr. Junz left Libair for the Arcturian Institute of Spatial Technology and later entered his profession, the early fairy tales were forgotten. Only once since then had he really wondered. He had happened upon one of the ancient worlds of the Centaurian sector in the course of business; one of those worlds whose history could be counted in millennia and whose language was so archaic that its dialect might almost be that lost and mythical language, English. They had a special word for a man with dark skin.

Now why should there be a special word for a man with dark skin? There was no special word for a man with blue eyes, or large ears, or curly hair. There was no—

The clerk's precise voice broke his reverie. "You have been at this office before, according to the record."

Dr. Junz said, with some asperity, "I have indeed, sir."

"But not recently."

"No, not recently."

"You are still in search of a spatioanalyst who disappeared," the clerk flipped sheets, "some eleven months and thirteen days ago."

"That's right."

"In all that time," said the clerk, in his dry, crumbly voice out of which all the juice seemed carefully pressed, "there has been no sign of the man and no evidence to the effect that he ever was anywhere in Sarkite territory."

"He was last reported," said the Scientist, "in space near Sark."

The clerk looked up and his pale blue eyes focused for a moment on Dr. Junz, then dropped quickly. "This may be so, but it is not evidence to his presence on Sark."

Not evidence! Dr. Junz's lips pressed tightly together. It was what the Interstellar Spatioanalysis Bureau had been telling him with increasing bluntness for months.

No evidence, Dr. Junz. We feel that your time might be better employed, Dr. Junz. The Bureau will see to it that the search is maintained, Dr. Junz.

What they really meant was stop wasting our dough, Junz!

It had begun, as the clerk had carefully stated, eleven months and thirteen days ago by Interstellar Standard Time—the clerk would, of course, not be guilty of using local time on a matter of this nature. Two days before that he had landed on Sark on what was to be a routine inspection of the Bureau's offices on that planet, but which turned out to be—Well, which turned out to be what it was.

He had been met by the local representative of the I.S.B., a wispy young man who was marked in Dr. Junz's thoughts chiefly by the fact that he chewed, incessantly, some product of Sark's chemical industry.

It was when the inspection was almost over and done with that the local agent recalled something, parked his Lasto-plug in the space behind his molars and said, "Message from one of the field-men, Dr. Junz. Probably not important. You know them."

It was the usual expression of dismissal: You know them. Dr. Junz looked up with a momentary flash of indignation. He was about to say that fifteen years ago, he himself had been a "field-man," then he remembered that after three months he had been able to endure it no longer. But it was that bit of anger that made him read the message with an earnest attention.

It went: Please keep direct coded line open to I.S.B. Central HQ for detailed mes-

sage involving matter of utmost importance. All galaxy affected. Am landing by minimum trajectory.

The agent was amused. His jaws had gone back to their rhythmic champing and he said, "Imagine, sir. 'All galaxy affected.' That's pretty good, even for a field-man. I called him after I got this to see if I could make any sense out of him, but that flopped. He just kept saying that the life of every human being on Florina was in danger. You know, half a billion lives at stake. He sounded very psychopathic. So frankly, I don't want to try to handle him alone when he lands. What do you suggest?"

Dr. Junz said, "Do you have a transcript of your talk?"

"Yes, sir." There was a few minutes searching. A sliver of film was finally found.

Dr. Junz ran it through the reader. He frowned. "This is a copy, isn't it?"

"I sent the original to the Bureau of Extraplanetary Transportation here on Sark. I thought it would be best if they met him on the landing field with an ambulance. He's probably in a bad way."

Dr. Junz felt the impulse to agree with the young man. When the lonely analysts of the depths of space finally broke over their jobs, their psychopathy was liable to be violent.

Then he said, "But wait. You sound as though he hasn't landed yet."

The agent looked surprised. "I suppose he has, but nobody's called me about it."

"Well, call Transportation and get the details. Psychopathic or not, the details must be on our records."

The spatioanalyst stopped in again the next day on a last-minute check before he left the planet. He had other matters to attend to on other worlds, and he was in a moderate hurry. Almost at the doorway, he said, over his shoulder, "How's our field-man doing?"

The agent said, "Oh, say. I meant to tell you. Transportation hasn't heard from him. I sent out the energy pattern of his hyper-atomic motors and they say his ship is nowhere in near space. The guy must have changed his mind about landing."

Dr. Junz decided to delay his departure for twenty-four hours. The next day he was at the Bureau of Extraplanetary Transportation in Sark City, capital of the planet. He met the Florinian bureaucracy for the first time and they shook their heads at him. They had received the message concerning

the prospective landing of an analyst of the I.S.B. Oh, yes, but no ship had landed.

But it was important, Dr. Junz insisted. The man was very sick, had they not received a copy of the transcript of his talk with the local I.S.B. agent. They opened their eyes wide at him. Transcript? No one could be found who remembered receiving that. They were sorry if the man were sick, but no I.S.B. ship had landed, and no I.S.B. ship was anywhere in near space.

Dr. Junz went back to his hotel room and thought many thoughts. The new deadline for his leaving passed. He called the desk and arranged that he be moved to another suite more adapted to an extended occupancy. Then he arranged an appointment with Ludigan Abel, the Trantorian Ambassador.

He spent the next day reading books on Sarkite history and when it was time for the appointment with Abel, his heart had become a slow drumbeat of anger. He was not going to quit easily, he knew that.

The old ambassador treated it as a social call, pumped his hand, had his mechanical bartender rolled in, and would not allow any discussion of business over the first two drinks. Junz used the opportunity for worth-while small talk, asked about the Florinian civil service and received the exposition on the practical genetics of Sark. His sense of anger deepened.

Junz always remembered Abel as he was that day. Deep-set eyes half closed under startling white eyebrows, beaky nose hovering intermittently over his goblet of wine, insunken cheeks accentuating the thinness of

his face and body, and a gnarled finger slowly keeping time to some unheard music. Junz began his story, telling it with stolid economy. Abel listened carefully and without interruption.

When Junz was finished, he dabbed delicately at his lips, and said, "Do you know this man who has disappeared?"

"No."

"Nor met him?"

"Our field-analysts are hard men to meet."

"Has he had delusions before this?"

"This is his first, according to the records at central I.S.B. offices, if it is a delusion."

"If?" The ambassador did not follow that up. He said, "And why have you come to me?"

"For help."

"Obviously. But in what way? What can I do?"

"Let me explain. The Sarkite Bureau of Extraplanetary Transportation has checked near space for the energy-pattern of the motors of our man's ship, and there is no sign of it. They wouldn't be lying about that. I do not say that the Sarkites are above lying, but they are certainly above useless lying, and they must know that I can have the matter checked in the space of two or three hours."

"True. What then?"

"There are two times when an energy-pattern trace will fail. One, when the ship is not in near space, because it has jumped through hyperspace and is in another region of the galaxy, and two, when it is not in space at all because it has landed on a planet. I cannot believe our man has

## Don't leave things to chance . . .

NOW AT 9d., YOUR FAVOURITE S.F. MAGAZINE IS IN EVEN GREATER DEMAND AND SUPPLIES MAY BE SHORT!

## ...be sure of your copy of Astounding

HAVE IT SENT TO YOU EACH MONTH BY POST. SIMPLY COMPLETE THE ATTACHED COUPON AND MAIL IT TO-DAY!

To : \_\_\_\_\_  
(your newsagent) or

ATLAS Publishing & Distributing Co. Ltd.  
18 BRIDE LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

Enclosed is remittance for 10/6. Kindly arrange for one year's subscription to:

### ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION

Commencing with the \_\_\_\_\_  
issue, to be sent to the following address:

(Name)

(Address)

(Block Letters Please)

Jumped. If his statements about peril to Florina and Galactic importance are megalomaniac delusions, nothing would stop him from coming to Sark to report on them. He would *not* have changed his mind and left. I've had fifteen years' experience with such things. If, by any chance, his statements were sane and real, then certainly the matter would be too serious to allow him to change his mind and leave near space."

The old Trantorian lifted a finger and waved it gently. "Your conclusion then is that he is on Sark."

"Exactly. Again, there are two alternatives. First, if he *is* in the grip of a psychosis, he may have landed anywhere on the planet other than at a recognized spaceport. He may be wandering about, sick and semi-amnesic. These things are very unusual, even for field-men, but they have happened. Usually, in such a case, the fits are temporary. As they pass, the victim finds the details of his job returning first, before any personal memories at all. After all, the spatioanalyst's job is his life. Very often, the amnesic is picked up because he wanders into a public library to look up references on spatioanalysis."

"I see. Then you want to have me help

you arrange with the Board of Librarians to have such a situation reported 'to you.'"

"No, because I don't anticipate any trouble there. I will ask that certain standard works on spatioanalysis be placed on reserve and that any man asking for them, other than those who can prove they are Sarkians, be held for questioning. They will agree to that because they will know, or certain of their superiors will know, that such a plan will come to nothing."

"Why not?"

"Because," and Junz was speaking rapidly now, caught up in a trembling cloud of fury, "I am certain that our man landed at Sark City spaceport exactly as he planned and, sane or psychotic, was then possibly imprisoned but probably killed by the Sarkite authorities."

Abel put down his nearly empty glass. "Are you joking?"

"Do I look as if I were? What did you tell me just half an hour ago about Sark. Their lives, prosperity and power depend upon their control of Florina. What has all my own reading in this past twenty-four hours shown me? That the *kyrt* fields of Florina are the wealth of Sark. And here comes a man, sane or psychotic, it doesn't matter, who claims that something of Galactic importance has put the life of every man and woman on Florina in danger. Look at this transcript of our man's last known conversation."

Abel picked up the sliver of film that had been dashed upon his lap by Junz and accepted the reader held out to him. He ran it through slowly, his faded eyes blinking and peering at the eyepiece.

"It's not very informative."

"Of course not. It says there is a danger. It says there is horrible urgency. That's all. But it should never have been sent to the Sarkites. Even if the man were wrong, could the Sarkite government allow him to broadcast whatever madness, granting it be madness, he has in his mind and fill the galaxy with it? Leaving out of consideration the panic it might give rise to on Florina, the interference with the production of *kyrt* thread, it remains a fact that the whole dirty mess of Sark-Florina political relationships would be exposed to the view of the galaxy as a whole. Consider that they need do away with only one man to prevent all that, since I can't take action on this transcript alone and they know it. Would Sark hesitate to stop at murder in such a case?

## AMERICAN MAGAZINES

*by post from the U.S.A.!*

Take out an Annual Subscription to one of the following:—

	Annual Rate
FLYING MODELS - - -	- 12/6
STAMPS - - -	- 21/-
THE RING (American edition)	25/-
STRENGTH & HEALTH	- 25/-
PEOPLE TO-DAY - - -	- 27/-
MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS	- 28/-
RECREATION - - -	- 29/-
POPULAR SCIENCE	- 30/6
RADIO-ELECTRONICS	- 32/6
METRONOME - - -	- 37/6
PHOTOGRAPHY - - -	- 37/9
FAMILY HANDYMAN - - -	- 40/-
MODEL RAILROADER - - -	- 45/6
DOWNBEAT - - -	- 49/3
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC	- 60/-

(all prices include postage)

Also many other Scientific or Technical Journals available

Send in your orders and enquiries to-day

Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co. Ltd.

18 BRIDE LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4



The world of such genetic experimenters as you describe would not hesitate."

"And what would you have me do? I am still not certain." Abel seemed unmoved.

"Find out if they have killed him," said Junz with dreadful grimness. "You must have an organization for espionage here. Oh, let's not quibble. I have been knocking about the galaxy long enough to have passed my political adolescence. Get to the bottom of this while I distract their attention with my library negotiations. And when you find them out for the murderers they are, I want Trantor to see to it that no government anywhere in the galaxy ever again has the notion it can kill an I.S.B. man and get away with it."

And there his first interview with Abel ended.

Junz was right in one thing. The Sarkite officials were co-operative and even sympathetic as far as making library arrangements were concerned.

But he seemed right in nothing else. Months passed, and Abel's agents could find no trace of the missing field-man anywhere on Sark, alive or dead.

For over eleven months that held true. Almost, Junz began to feel ready to quit. Almost, he decided to wait for the twelfth month to be done and then no more. And then the break came and it was not from Abel at all, but from the nearly forgotten straw-man he had himself set up. A report came from Sark's public library and Junz found himself sitting across the desk from a Florinian civil servant in the Bureau of Florinian Affairs.

The clerk completed his mental arrangement of the case. He had turned the last sheet.

He looked up. "Now what can I do for you?"

Junz spoke with precision. "Yesterday, at 4:22 p.m., I was informed that the Florinian branch of the Public Library of Sark was holding a man for me who had attempted to consult two standard texts on spatio-analysis and who was not a native Sarkite. I have not heard from the library since."

He continued, raising his voice to override some comment begun by the clerk. He said, "A telenews bulletin received over a public instrument owned by the hotel at which I maintain residence, and timed 5:05 p.m. yesterday, claimed that a member of the Florinian Patrol had been knocked unconscious in the Florinian branch of the Public

Library of Sark and that three native Florinians believed responsible for the outrage were being pursued. That bulletin was not repeated in later news broadcast summaries.

"Now I have no doubt that the two pieces of information are connected. I have no doubt that the man I want is in the custody of the Patrol. I have asked for permission to travel to Florina and been refused. I have sub-ethered Florina to send the man in question to Sark and have received no answer. I come to the Bureau of Florinian Affairs to demand action in this respect. Either I go there or he comes here."

The clerk's lifeless voice said, "The Government of Sark cannot accept ultimata from officers of the I.S.B. I have been warned by my superiors that you would probably be questioning me in these matters and I have been instructed as to the facts I am to make known to you. The man who was reported to be consulting the reserved texts, along with two companions, a Townsman and a Florinian female, did indeed commit the assault you referred to, and were pursued by the Patrol. They were not, however, apprehended."

A bitter disappointment swept over Junz. He did not bother to try to hide it. "They have escaped?"

"Not exactly. They were traced to the bakery shop of one Matt Khorov."

Junz stared. "And allowed to remain there?"

"Have you been in conference with His Excellency, Ludigan Abel, lately?"

"What has that to do with—"

"We are informed that you have been frequently seen at the Trantorian Embassy."

"I have not seen the ambassador in a week."

"Then I suggest you see him. We allowed the criminals to remain unharmed at Khorov's shop out of respect for our delicate interstellar relationships with Trantor. I have been instructed to tell you, if it seemed necessary, that Khorov, as you probably will not be surprised to hear"—and here the white face took on something uncommonly like a sneer—"is well-known to our Department of Security as an agent of Trantor."

## CHAPTER VI.

It was ten hours before Junz had had his interview with the clerk, that Terens had left Khorov's bakery.

Terens kept a hand on the rough surfaces of the workers' hovels he passed, as he stepped gingerly along the alleys of the city. Except for the pale light that washed down in a periodic glimmer from the Upper City, he was in total darkness. What light might exist in Lower City would be the pearly flashes of the Patrolters, marching in twos and threes.

Lower City lay like a slumbering noxious monster, its greasy coils hidden by the glittering cover of Upper City. Parts of it probably maintained a shadowy life as produce was brought in and stored for the coming day, but that was not here, not in the slums.

Terens shrank into a dusty alley—even the nightly showers of Florina could scarcely penetrate into the shadowy regions beneath the cementalloy—as the distant clank of footsteps reached him. Lights appeared, and disappeared a hundred yards away.

All night long the Patrolters marched back and forth. They needed only to march. The fear they inspired was strong enough to maintain order with scarcely any display of force. With no city lights, the darkness might well be cover for innumerable crawling humans, but even without Patrolters as a distant threat, that danger could have been discounted. The food stores and workshops were well guarded; the luxury of Upper City was unattainable; and to steal from one another, to parasitize on another's misery, was obviously futile.

What would be considered crime on other worlds was virtually non-existent here in the dark. The poor were at hand but had been picked clean, and the rich were strictly out of reach.

Terens flitted on, his face gleaming white when he passed under one of the openings in the cementalloy above and could not help but look up.

Out of reach!

Were they indeed out of reach? How many changes in attitude toward the Squires of Sark had he endured in his life. As a child, Patrolters were monsters in black and silver, from whom one fled as a matter of course, whether one had done wrong or not. The Squires were misty and mystical supermen, enormously good, who lived in a paradise known as Sark and brooded watchfully and patiently over the welfare of the foolish men and women of Florina.

He would repeat every day in school: May the Spirit of the Galaxy watch over the Squires as they watch over us.

Yes, he thought now, exactly. Exactly! Let the Spirit be to them as they to us. No more and no less. His fists clenched and burned in the shadows.

When he was ten, he had written an essay for school about what he imagined life to be like on Sark. It had been a work of purely creative imagination, designed to show off his penmanship. He remembered very little, only one passage in fact. In that, he described the Squires, gathering every morning in a great hall with colors like those of the *kyrt* blossoms and standing about gravely in twenty-foot-high splendor, debating on the sins of the Florinians and sorrowfully somber over the necessities of winning them back to virtue.

The teacher had been very pleased, and at the end of the year, when the other boys and girls proceeded with their short sessions on reading, writing, and morality, he was promoted to a special class where he learned arithmetic, galactography, and Sarkite history. At the age of sixteen, he was taken to Sark.

He could still remember the greatness of that day, and he shuddered away from the memory. The thought of it shamed him.

Terens was approaching the outskirts of the city now. An occasional breeze brought him the heavy night-odor of the *kyrt* blossoms. A few minutes now and he would be out in the relative safety of the open fields where there were no regular Patrolter beats and where, through the ragged night clouds, he would see the stars again. Even the hard, bright yellow star that was Sark's sun.

It had been his sun for half his life. When he first saw it through a spaceship's porthole as more than a star, as an unbearably bright little marble, he wanted to get on his knees. The thought that he was approaching paradise removed even the fright that had paralyzed him when first he felt acceleration seize him as he left a planet for space for the first time in his life.

He landed on his paradise, and was delivered to an old Florinian who saw to it that he was bathed and clothed becomingly. He was brought to a large building and on the way there his elderly guide had bowed low to a figure that passed.

"Bow!" the old one muttered angrily to the young Terens.

Terens did so and was confused. "Who was that?"

"A Squire, you ignorant farmhand."

"He! A Squire?"

He stopped dead in his tracks and had to be urged forward. It was his first sight of a Squire. Not twenty feet tall at all, but a man like men. Other Florinian youths might have recovered from the shock of such a disillusion, but not Terens. Something changed inside him; changed permanently.

In all the training he received; through all the studies in which he did so well; he never forgot that Squires were men.

For ten years he studied, and when he neither studied nor ate nor slept, he was taught to make himself useful in many small ways. He was taught to run messages and empty wastebaskets, to bow low when a Squire passed and to turn his face respectfully to the wall when a Squire's lady passed.

For five more years he worked in the Civil Service, shifted as usual from post to post in order that his capacities might best be tested under a variety of conditions.

A plump, soft Florinian visited him once, smiling his friendship, pinching his shoulder gently, and asked what he thought of the Squires.

Terens repressed a desire to turn away and run. He wondered if his thoughts could have imprinted themselves in some obscure code upon the lines of his face. He shook his head, murmured a string of banalities on the goodness of the Squires.

But the plump one stretched his lips and said, "You don't mean that. Come to this place tonight." He gave him a small card, that crumbled and charred in a few minutes.

Terens went. He was afraid, but very curious. There he met friends of his, who looked at him with secrecy in their eyes and who met him at work later with bland glances of indifference. He listened to what they said and found that many seemed to believe what he had been hoarding in his own mind and honestly had thought to be his own creation and no one else's.

He learned that at least some Florinians thought the Squires to be vile brutes who milked Florina of its riches for their own useless good, while they left the hard-working natives to wallow in ignorance and poverty. He learned that the time was coming when there would be a giant uprising against Sark and all the luxury and wealth of Florina would be appropriated by their rightful owners.

How, Terens asked. He asked it over and over again. After all, the Squires and the Patrollers had the weapons.

And they told him of Trantor, of the gigantic Empire that had swollen in the last few centuries until half the inhabited worlds of the galaxy were part of it. Trantor, they said, would destroy Sark with the help of the Florinians.

But, said Terens, first to himself, then to others, if Trantor was so large and Florina so small, would not Trantor simply replace Sark as a still larger and more tyrannical master. If that were the only escape, Sark was to be endured in preference. Better the master they knew than the master they knew not.

He was derided and ejected, with threats against his life if he ever talked of what he had heard.

But some time afterward, he noted that, one by one, those of the conspiracy disappeared, until only the original plump one was left.

Occasionally, he saw that one whisper to some newcomer here and there, but it would not have been safe to warn the young victim that he was being presented with a temptation and a test. He would have to find his own way, as had Terens.

Terens even spent some time in the Department of Security, which only a few Florinians could ever expect to fall heir to. It was a short stay, for the power attached to an official in Security was such that the time spent there by any individual was even shorter than elsewhere.

But here Terens found, somewhat to his surprise, that there were real conspiracies to be countered. Somehow men and women met in Florina and plotted rebellion. Usually, these were surreptitiously supported by Trantorian money. Sometimes, the would-be rebels actually thought Florina could succeed unaided.

Terens meditated on the matter. His words were few, his bearing correct, but his thoughts ranged unchecked. The Squires he hated, partly because they were not twenty feet tall, partly because he might not look at their women, and partly because he had served a few, with bowed head, and had found that for all their arrogance they were foolish creatures no better educated than himself and usually far less intelligent.

Yet what alternative to this personal slavery was there? To exchange the stupid Sarkite Squire for the stupid Trantorian Imperial was useless. To expect the Florinian peasants to do something on their own was fantastically foolish. So there was no way out.

It was the problem that had been in his mind for years; as a student, as petty official, and as Townman.

And then there arose the peculiar set of circumstances that had now put an undreamed-of answer in his hands in the person of this insignificant looking man who had once been a spatioanalyst and who now babbled of something that put the life of every man and woman on Florina in danger.

Terens was out in the fields now, where the night rain was ending and the stars gleamed wetly among the clouds. He breathed deeply of the *kyrt* that was Florina's treasure and her curse.

He was under no illusions. He was no longer a Townman. He was not even a free Florinian peasant. He was a criminal on the run; a fugitive who must hide.

Yet there was a burning in his mind. For the last twenty-four hours he had in his hands the greatest weapon against Sark anyone could have dreamed of. There was no question about it. He *knew* that Rik remembered correctly; that he *had* been a spatioanalyst once; that he *had* been psycho-probed into near brainlessness; and that what he remembered was something true and horrible and—powerful.

He was sure of it.

And now this Rik was in the thick hands of a man who pretended to be a Florinian patriot but was acutally a Trantorian agent.

Terens felt the bitterness of his anger in the back of his throat. Of course this Baker was a Trantorian agent. He had had no doubts about that from the first moment. Who else among dwellers in the Lower City would have the capital to build dummy radar ovens?

He could not allow Rik to fall into the hands of Trantor. He *would not* allow Rik to fall into the hands of Trantor. There was no limit to the risks he was prepared to run. What matter the risks? He had incurred the death-penalty already. There was nothing more to lose.

There was a dim gleam in the corner of the sky. He would wait for dawn. The various Patroller stations would have his description, of course, but it might take several minutes for his appearance to register.

And during those several minutes he would be a Townman. It would give him time to do something that even now he didn't dare let his mind dwell upon.

It was ten hours after Junz had had his interview with the clerk that he met Ludigan Abel again.

The ambassador greeted Junz with his usual surface cordiality, yet with a definite and disturbing sensation of guilt. At their first meeting—it had been a long time ago; nearly a Standard Year had passed—he had paid no attention to the man's story *per se*. His only thought had been: Will this, or can this help Trantor?

Trantor! It was always first in his thought, yet he was not the kind of fool who would worship a cluster of stars or the yellow emblem of Spaceship-and-Sun that the Trantorian armed forces wore. In short, he was not a patriot in the ordinary meaning of the word and Trantor as Trantor meant nothing to him.

But he did worship peace; all the more so because he was growing old and enjoyed his glass of wine, his atmosphere saturated with mild music and perfume, his afternoon nap, and his quiet wait for death. It was how he imagined all men must feel; yet all men suffered war and destruction. They died frozen in the vacuum of space, vaporized in the blast of exploding atoms, famished on a besieged and bombarded planet.

How then to enforce peace? Not by reason, certainly, nor by education. If a man could not look at the fact of peace and the fact of war and choose the former in preference to the latter, what additional argument could persuade him? What could be more eloquent as a condemnation of war than war itself? What tremendous feat of dialectic could carry with it a tenth the power of a single gutted ship with its ghastly cargo?

So then, to end the misuse of force, only one solution was left, force itself.

Abel had a map of Trantor in his study, so designed as to show the application of that force. It was clear crystalline ovoid in which the Galactic lens was three dimensionally laid out; its stars were specks of white diamond-dust, its nebulae, patches of light or dark fog; and in its central depths, there were the few red specks that had been the Trantorian Republic.

Not "were" but "had been." The Trantorian Republic had been a mere five worlds, five hundred years earlier.

But it was a historical map, and showed the Republic at that stage only when the dial was set at zero. Advance the dial one notch and the pictured galaxy would be as it



HER HIGHNESS

# JOAN THE WAD

266, JOAN'S COTTAGE,  
LANIVET, BODMIN,  
CORNWALL.



ALWAYS UPON YOU DAME FORTUNE WILL NOO, IF YOU ALWAYS CARRY YOUR WEE JOAN THE WAD.

**AS HEALER.** One Lady writes: "My sister suffered very badly for years, but since I gave her a Joan the Wad to keep near her she is much easier. Do you think this is due to Joan or the water from the Lucky Well?"

**AS LUCK BRINGER.** Another writes: "Since the war my wife and I have been dogged by persistent ill-luck and we seemed to be sinking lower and lower. One day someone

sent us a Joan the Wad. We have never found out who it was, but, coincidence if you like, within a week I got a much better job and my wife had some money left her. Since then we have never looked back and, needless to say, swear by 'Queen Joan'."

**AS MATCHMAKER.** A young girl wrote and informed me that she had had scores of boy friends, but it was not until she had visited Cornwall and taken Joan back with her that she met the boy of her dreams, and as they got better acquainted she discovered he also has "Joan the Wad."

**AS PRIZEWINNER.** A young man wrote us only last week: "For two years I entered competitions without luck, but since getting Joan the Wad I have frequently been successful although I have not won a big prize. But I know that ... who won £2,000 in a competition has one because I gave it to him. When he won his £2,000 he gave me £100 for myself, so you see I have cause to bless 'Queen Joan'."

**DO YOU BELIEVE IN LUCK?**

**HURRY**

Mrs. WILSON, of Falmouth, says, 1951:  
Since receiving Joan the Wad ... my husband's health has improved 100%.

Mr. Jones, of Cheltenham, says, 1951:  
... Send me J. O' Lantern. Since receiving Joan the Wad have won two 1st prizes in Cross-words ... *John Bull and Sunday Chronicle.*

**SEND NOW**

## JOAN THE WAD



is Queen of the Lucky Cornish Piskeys. Thousands of persons all over the world claim that she has brought them Wonderful Luck in the way of Health, Wealth and Happiness.

### HISTORY FREE FOR A STAMP.

If you will send me your name and address, a 1/- stamp and a stamped addressed envelope for reply, I will send you a history of the Cornish Piskey folk, and the marvellous miracles they accomplish.

All you have to do is to send 1/- stamp (saving stamps accepted) and a stamped addressed envelope for the history to

**266, JOAN'S COTTAGE, LANIVET, BODMIN, CORNWALL, ENG.**

For Canada and U.S.A., send 50 cents for History, or \$2 for both History and Mascot. For Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Rhodesia, Barbados and other Colonies, send 1s. 6d. for History, or 8s. 6d. for both History and Mascot.

**AS SPECULATOR.** A man writes: "I had some shares that for several years I couldn't give away. They were 1/- shares and all of a sudden they went up in the market to 7/6. I happened to be staring at Joan the Wad. Pure imagination, you may say, but I thought I saw her wink approvingly. I sold out, reinvested the money at greater profit and have prospered ever since."





was fifty years later and a sheaf of stars would reddened about Trantor's rim.

In ten stages, a half a millennium would pass and the crimson would spread like a widening bloodstain until more than half the galaxy had fallen into the red bubble.

That red was the red blood in more than a fanciful way. As the Trantorian Republic became the Trantorian Confederation and then the Trantorian Empire, its advance lay through a tangled forest of gutted men, gutted ships, and gutted worlds. Yet through it all Trantor had become strong and within the red there was peace.

Now Trantor trembled at the brink of a new conversion: from Trantorian Empire to Galactic Empire and then the red would engulf all the stars and there would be universal peace—*pax Trantorica*.

Abel wanted that. Five hundred years ago, four hundred years ago, even two hundred years ago, he would have opposed Trantor as an unpleasant nest of nasty, materialistic and aggressive people, careless of the rights of others, imperfectly democratic at home though quick at seeing the minor slaveries of others, and greedy without end. But the time had passed for all that.

He was not for Trantor, but for the all-embracing end that Trantor represented. So the question: How will this help Galactic peace? naturally became: How will this help Trantor?

The trouble was that in this particular instance he could not be certain. To Junz the solution was obviously a straightforward one. Trantor must uphold the I.S.B. and punish Sark.

Possibly, this would be a good thing, if something could definitely be proven against Sark. Possibly not, even then. Certainly not, if nothing could be proven. But in any case, Trantor could not move rashly. All the galaxy could see that Trantor stood at the edge of Galactic dominion and there was still a chance that what yet remained of the non-Trantorian planets might unite against that. Trantor could win even such a war, but perhaps not without paying a price that would make victory only a pleasanter name for defeat.

So Trantor must never make an incautious move in this final stage of the game. Abel had, therefore, proceeded slowly, casting his gentle web across the labyrinth of the Civil Service and the glitter of the Sarkite Squiredom, probing with a smile and questioning without seeming to. Nor did he forget to

keep the fingers of the Trantorian secret service upon Junz himself lest the angry Libairian do in a moment damage that Abel could not repair in a year.

Abel was astonished at the Libairian's persistent anger. He asked him once, "Why does one agent concern you so?"

He half-expected a speech on the integrity of the I.S.B. and the duty of all to uphold the Bureau as an instrument, not of this world or that, but of all humanity. He did not get it.

Instead, Junz frowned and said, "Because at the bottom of all this lies the relationship between Sark and Florina. I want to expose that relationship and destroy it."

Abel felt nothing less than nausea. Always, everywhere, there was this preoccupation with single worlds, that prevented, over and over again, any intelligent concentration upon the problem of Galactic unity. Certainly social injustices existed here and there. Certainly they seemed sometimes impossible to stomach. But who could imagine that such injustice could be solved on any scale less than Galactic. First, there must be an end to war and national rivalry and only then could one turn to the internal miseries that, after all, had external conflict as their chief cause.

And Junz was not even of Florina. He had not even that cause for emotionalized shortsightedness.

Abel said, "What is Florina to you?" Junz hesitated. He said, "I feel a kinship."

"But you are a Libairian. Or at least, that is my impression."

"I am, but there lies the kinship. We are both extremes in a galaxy of the average."

"Extremes? I don't understand."

Junz said, "In skin pigmentation. They are unusually pale. We are unusually dark. It means something. It binds us together. It gives us something in common. It seems to me our ancestors must have had long histories of being different, even of being excluded from the social majority. We are unfortunate whites and darks, brothers in being different."

By that time, under Abel's astonished gaze, Junz stumbled to a halt. The subject was never sounded again.

And now, after a year, without warning, without any previous intimations, just at the point where, perhaps, a quiet trailing end might be expected of the whole wretched matter and where even Junz showed signs of flagging zeal, it all exploded.

He faced a different Junz now, one whose

anger was not reserved for Sark, but spilled and overflowed on to Abel as well.

"It is not," the Libairian said, in part, "that I resent the fact that your agents have been set upon my heels. Presumably, you are cautious and must rely on nothing and nobody. Good, as far as that goes. But why was I not informed as soon as our man was located?"

Abel's hand smoothed the warm fabric of the arm of his chair. "Matters are complicated. Always complicated. I had arranged that any report on an unauthorized seeker after spatioanalytic data be reported to certain of my own agents as well as to you. I even thought you might need protection. But on Florina—"

Junz said bitterly, "Yes. We were fools not to have considered that. We spent nearly a year proving we could find him nowhere on Sark. He *had* to be on Florina and we were blind to that. In any case, we have him now. Or you have, and presumably it will be arranged to have me see him?"

Abel did not answer directly. He said, "You say they told you this man, Khorov, was a Trantorian agent."

"Isn't he? Why should they lie? Or are they misinformed?"

"They neither lie nor are they misinformed. He has been an agent of ours for a decade, and it is disturbing to me that they were aware of it. It makes me wonder what more they know of us and how shaky our structure may be altogether. But doesn't it make you wonder why they told you baldly that he was one of our men?"

"Because it was the truth I imagine, and to keep me, once and for all, from embarrassing them by further demands that could only cause trouble between themselves and Trantor."

"Truth is a discredited commodity among diplomats and what greater trouble can they cause for themselves than to let us know the extent of their knowledge about us; to give us the opportunity, before it is too late, to draw in our damaged net, mend it and put it out whole again."

"Then answer your own question."

"I say they told you of their knowledge of Khorov's true identity as a gesture of triumph. They knew that the fact of their knowledge could no longer either help or harm them since I have known for twelve hours that they knew Khorov was one of our men."

"But how?"

"By the most unmistakable hint possible.

Listen! Twelve hours ago, Matt Khorov, agent for Trantor, was killed by a member of the Florinian Patrol. The two Florinians he held at the time, a woman and the man who, in all probability, is the field-man you have been seeking are gone, vanished. Presumably, they are in the hands of the Squires."

Junz cried out and half rose from his seat.

Abel lifted a glass of wine to his lips calmly, and said, "There is nothing I can do officially. The dead man was a Florinian and those who have vanished, for all we can prove to the contrary, are likewise Florinians. So, you see, we have been badly outplayed, and are now being mocked in addition."

## CHAPTER VII.

RIK saw the Baker killed. He saw him crumple without a sound, his chest driven in and charred into smoking ruins under the silent push of the blaster. It was a sight that drowned out for him most of what had preceded and almost all that had followed.

There was the dim memory of the Patroller's first approach, of the quiet but terribly intent manner in which he had drawn his weapon. The Baker had looked up and shaped his lips for one last word he had no time to utter. When the deed was done, there was the rushing of blood in Rik's ears and the wild screaming scramble of the mob swirling in all directions, like a river in flood.

For a moment, it negated the improvement Rik's mind had made in those last few hours of sleep. The Patroller had plunged toward him, throwing himself forward upon yelling men and women as though they were a vicious sea of mud he would have to slog through. Rik and Lona turned with the current and were carried away. There were eddies and sub-currents, turning and quivering as the flying cars that carried Patrollers began to hover overhead and amplified voices began to enforce a beginning of order. But Valona urged Rik forward, ever outward to the outskirts of the city. For a while, he was the frightened child of yesterday, not the almost-adult of that morning.

He had awakened that morning in the grayness of a dawn he could not see in the windowless room he slept in. For long minutes, he lay there, inspecting his mind. Something had healed during the night; something had knit together and become

whole. It had been getting ready to happen ever since the moment, two days before, when he had begun to "remember." The process had been proceeding all through yesterday. The trip to the Upper City and the Library, the attack upon the Patroller and the flight that followed, the encounter with the Baker; it had all acted upon him like a ferment. The shriveled fibers of his mind, so long dormant, had been seized and stretched, forced into an aching activity, and now, after a sleep, there was a feeble pulsing about them.

He thought of space and the stars, of long, long, lonely stretches, and great silences.

Finally, he turned his head to one side and said, "Lona."

She snapped awake, lifting herself to an elbow, peering in his direction.

"Rik?"

"Here I am, Lona."

"Are you all right?"

"Sure." He couldn't hold down his excitement. "I feel fine, Lona. Listen! I remember more. I was in a ship and I know exactly—"

But she wasn't listening to him. She slipped into her dress and with her back to him smoothed the seam shut down the front and then fumbled nervously with her belt.

She tiptoed toward him. "I didn't mean to sleep, Rik. I tried to stay awake."

Rik felt the infection of her nervousness. He said, "Is something wrong?"

"Sh! don't speak so loudly. It's all right."

"Where's the Townman?"

"He's not here. He . . . he had to leave. Why don't you go back to sleep, Rik?"

He pushed her consoling arm aside. "I'm all right. I don't want to sleep. I wanted to tell the Townman about my ship."

But the Townman wasn't there and Valona would not listen. Rik subsided and for the first time felt actively annoyed with Valona. She treated him as though he were a child and he was beginning to feel like a man.

A light entered the room and the broad figure of the Baker entered with it. Rik blinked at him and was, for a moment, daunted. He did not entirely object when Valona's comforting arm stole about his shoulder.

The Baker's thick lips stretched in a smile. "You're early awake."

Neither answered.

The Baker said, "It's just as well. You'll be moving today."

Valona's mouth was dry. She said, "You'll not be giving us to the Patrollers?"

She remembered the way he had looked at Rik after the Townman had left. He was still looking at Rik; only at Rik.

"Not to the Patrollers," he said. "The proper people have been informed and you'll be safe enough."

He left, and when he returned shortly thereafter, he brought food, clothes, and two basins of water. The clothes were new and looked completely strange.

He watched them as they ate, saying, "I'm going to give you new names and new histories. You're to listen, and I don't want you to forget. You're not Florinians, do you understand? You're brother and sister from the planet, Wotex. You've been visiting Florina—"

He went on, supplying details, asking questions, listening to their answers.

Rik was pleased to be able to demonstrate the workings of his memory, his easy ability to learn, but Valona's eyes were dark with worry.

The Baker was not blind to that. He said to the girl, "If you give me the least trouble, I'll send him on alone, and leave you behind."

Valona's strong hands clenched spasmodically. "I will give you no trouble."

It was well into the morning when the Baker rose to his feet and said, "Let's go!"

His last action was to place little black sheets of limp leatherette, in their breast pockets.

Once outside, Rik looked with astonishment at what he could see of himself. He did not know clothing could be so complicated. The Baker had helped him get them on, but who would help him take them off. Valona didn't look like a farmgirl at all. Even her legs were covered with thin material, and her shoes were raised at the heels so that she had to balance carefully when she walked.

Passers-by gathered, staring and gawking, calling to one another. Mostly they were children, marketing women, and skulking, ragged idlers. The Baker seemed oblivious to them. He carried a thick stick which found itself occasionally, as though by accident, between the legs of any who pressed too closely.

And then, when they were only a hundred yards from the Bakery and had made but one turning, the outer reaches of the surrounding crowd swirled excitedly and

Rik made out the black and silver of a Patroller.

That was when it happened. The weapon, the blast, and again a wild flight. Was there ever a time when fear was not with him, when the shadow of the Patroller was not behind him?

They found themselves in the squalor of one of the outlying districts of the City. Valona was panting harshly; her new dress bore the wet stains of perspiration.

Rik gasped, "I can't run any more."

"We've got to."

"Not like this. Listen." He pulled back firmly against the pressure of the girl's grip. "Listen to me."

The fright and panic was leaving him. He could feel himself turning whole again.

He said, "Why don't we go and do what the Baker wanted us to do?"

She said, "How do you know what he wanted us to do?" She was anxious. She wanted to keep moving.

He said, "We were to pretend we were from another world and he gave us these." Rik was excited. He pulled the little rectangle out of his pocket, staring at both sides and trying to open it as though it were a booklet.

He couldn't. It was a single sheet. He felt about the edges and as his fingers closed at one corner, he heard or rather felt, something give, and the side toward him turned a startling milky white. The close wording on the new surface was difficult to understand though he began carefully making out the syllables.

Finally, he said, "It's a passport."

"What's that?"

"Something to get us away." He was sure of it. It had popped into his head. A single word, "passport," like that. "Don't you see? He was going to have us leave Florina. On a ship. Let's go through with that."

She said, "No, they stopped him. They killed him. We couldn't, Rik, we couldn't."

He was urgent about it. He was nearly babbling, "But it would be the best thing to do. They wouldn't be expecting us to do that. And we wouldn't go on the ship he wanted us to go on. They'd be watching that. We'd go on another ship. Any other ship."

A ship. Any ship. The words rang in his ears. Whether his idea was a good one or not, he didn't care. He wanted to be on a ship. He wanted to be in space.

"Please, Lona!"

She said, "All right. If you really think so. I know where the spaceport is. When I was a little girl, we used to go there on idle days sometimes and watch from far away to see the ships shoot upward."

They were on their way again, and only a slight uneasiness scratched vainly at the gateway of Rik's consciousness. Some memory not of the far past, but of the very near past; something he should remember and could not; could just barely not. Something.

He drowned it in the thought of the ship that waited for them.

The Florinian at the entry gate was having his fill of excitement that day, but it was excitement at long distance. There had been the wild stories the previous evening throughout the city, telling of Patrollers attacked and of daring escapes. By this morning, the stories had expanded and there were whispers of Patrollers killed.

He dared not leave his post, but he craned his neck and watched the aircars pass, and the grim-faced Patrollers leave as the spaceport contingent was cut and cut until it was almost nothing.

They were filling the city with Patrollers, he thought, and was at once frightened and drunkenly uplifted. Why should it make him happy to think of Patrollers being killed? They never bothered him. At least, not much. He had a good job. It wasn't as though he were a stupid peasant.

But he was happy.

He scarcely had time for the couple before him, uncomfortable and perspiring in outlandish clothing that marked them at once as foreigners. The woman was holding a passport through the slot.

A glance at her, a glance at the passport, a glance at the list of reservations. He pressed the appropriate button and two translucent ribbons of film sprang out at them.

"Go on," he said, impatiently. "Get them on your wrists and move on."

"Which ship is ours?" asked the woman in a polite whisper.

That pleased him. Foreigners were infrequent at the Florinian spaceport. In recent years they had grown more and more infrequent. But when they did come, they were neither Patrollers nor Squires. They didn't seem to realize you were only a Florinian yourself and they spoke to you politely.

It made him feel two inches taller. He said, "You'll find it in Berth 17, madam."

I wish you a pleasant trip to Wotex." He said it in the grand manner.

He then returned to his task of putting in surreptitious calls to friends in the city for more information and of trying, even more unobtrusively, to tap private power-beam conversations in Upper City.

It was hours before he found out that he had made a horrible mistake.

Rik said, "Lona!"

He tugged at her elbow, pointed quickly and whispered, "That one!"

Valona looked at the indicated ship doubtfully. It was much smaller than the ship in Berth 17, for which their tickets held good. It looked more burnished. Four air locks yawned open and the main port gaped, with a ramp leading from it like an outstretched tongue reaching to ground level.

Rik said, "They're airing it. They usually air passenger ships before flight to get rid of the accumulated odor of canned oxygen, used and re-used."

Valona stared at him. "How do you know?"

Rik felt a sprig of vanity grow within himself. "I just know. You see, there wouldn't be anyone in it now. It isn't comfortable, with the draft on."

He looked about, uneasily. "I don't know why there aren't more people about, though. Was it like this when you used to watch it?"

Valona thought not, but she could scarcely remember. Childhood memories were far away.

There was not a Patroller in sight as they walked up the ramp on quivering legs. What figures they could see were civilian employees, intent on their own jobs, and small in the distance.

Moving air cut through them as they stepped into the hold and Valona's dress bellied so that she had to bring her hands down to keep the hemline within bounds.

"Is it always like this?" she asked. She had never been on a spaceship before; never dreamed of being on one. Her lips stuck together and her heart pounded.

Rik said, "No. Just during aeration."

He walked joyfully over the hard metallite passageways, inspecting the empty rooms eagerly.

"Here," he said. It was the galley.

He spoke rapidly. "It isn't food so much. We can get along without food for quite a while. It's water."

He rummaged through the neat and compact nestings of utensils and came up with a large, capped container. He

looked about for the water tap, muttered a breathless hope that they had not neglected to fill the water tanks, then grinned his relief when the soft sound of pumps came and the steady gush of liquid.

"Now just take some of the cans. Not too many. We don't want them to take notice."

Rik tried desperately to think of ways of countering discovery. Again he groped for something he could not quite remember. Occasionally, he still ran into those gaps in his thought and cowardlike, he avoided them, denied their existence.

He found a small room devoted to fire-fighting equipment, emergency medical and surgical supplies, and welding equipment.

He said with a certain lack of confidence, "They won't be in here, except in emergencies. Are you afraid, Lona?"

"I won't be afraid with you, Rik," she said, humbly. Two days before, no, twelve hours before, it had been the other way around. But on board ship, by some transmutation of personality she did not question, it was Rik who was the adult, she who was the child.

He said, "We won't be able to use lights because they would notice the power-drain, and to use the toilets, we'll have to wait for rest periods and try to get out past any of the night crew."

The draft cut off suddenly. Its cold touch on their faces was no longer there and the soft, steady humming sound that had distantly accompanied it stopped and left a large silence to fill its place.

Rik said, "They'll be boarding soon, and then we'll be out in space."

Valona had never seen such joy in Rik's face. He was a lover going to meet his love.

If Rik had felt a man on awaking that dawn, he was a giant now; his arms stretching the length of the galaxy. The stars were his marbles, and the nebulae were cobwebs to brush away.

He was on a ship! Memories rushed back continuously in a long flood and others left to make room. He was forgetting the *kyrt* fields and the mill and Valona crooning to him in the dark. They were only momentary breaks in a pattern that was now returning, with its raveled ends slowly knitting.

It was the ship!

If they had put him on a ship long ago, he wouldn't have had to wait so long for his burnt-out brain cells to heal themselves.

He spoke softly to Valona in the darkness. "Now, don't worry. You'll feel a



vibration and hear a noise but that will be just the motors. There'll be a heavy weight on you. That's acceleration."

There was no common Florinian word for the concept and he used another word for it, one that came easily to mind. Valona did not understand.

She said, "Will it hurt?"

He said, "It will be very uncomfortable, because we don't have anti-acceleration gear to take up the pressure, but it won't last. Just stand against this wall, and when you feel yourself being pushed against it, relax. See, it's beginning."

He had picked the right wall, and as the thrumming of the thrusting hyperatomics swelled, the apparent gravity shifted, and what had been vertical wall, seemed to grow more and more diagonal.

Valona whispered once, then lapsed into a hard-breathing silence. Both throats rasped as their chest walls, unprotected by straps and hydraulic absorbers, labored to free their lungs sufficiently for just a little air-intake.

Rik managed to pant out words, any words that might let Valona know he was there and ease the terrible fear of the unknown that he knew must be filling her. It was only a ship, only a wonderful ship; but she had never been on a ship before.

He said, "There's the Jump, of course, when we go through hyper-space and cut across most of the distance between the stars all at once. That won't bother you at all. You won't even know it happened. It's nothing compared to this. Just a little twitch in your insides and it's over." He got the words out syllable by grunted syllable. It took a long time.

Slowly, the weight on their chests lifted and the invisible chain holding them to the wall stretched and dropped off. They fell, panting, to the floor.

Finally, Valona said, "Are you hurt, Rik?"

"I hurt?" He managed to laugh. He had not caught his breath yet, but he laughed at the thought that he could be hurt on a ship.

He said, "I lived on a ship for years once. I didn't land on a planet for months at a time."

"Why?" she asked. She crawled closer and put a hand to his cheek, making sure he was there.

He put his arm about her shoulder, and she rested within it quietly, accepting the reversal.

# PSORIASIS

Whatever the extent, and it may be anything from two or three small spots on elbows and knees to large patches on the scalp, body and limbs. Psoriasis is always most distressing and embarrassing to the sufferer.

Psoriasis forms a white lustrous scale on a reddened area of skin. Both the scale and skin are always dry unless broken or brought away by too much force when scratching or combing.

In most cases the reddened skin is of a normal temperature and the scale thick and raised on the skin, especially on the scalp, elbows and knees. Where the skin is of finer texture as on the body, scaling takes place as thin flakes or a light powder. In severe cases all the scales—thick, thin, flake or powder—will come away in shoals.

The onset of Psoriasis varies considerably. It may be hereditary, may occur with puberty, may follow injury, exposure, shock, worry, faulty nutrition or faulty elimination. It may also be persistent and recurring, and sufferers despair of ever having a clear, healthy skin.

## A NEW OUTLOOK Brochure for all sufferers

No matter how long you have suffered, no matter how many eruptions you may have, no matter how extensive the eruptions may be, the brochure will bring renewed hope of a clear and healthy skin. It tells of others who suffered for years but have had complete relief. Psoriasis that was very extensive and persistent yielded to a skin without blemish.

Think what a healthy skin means to you. No unsightly scale, nor distressing patches or redness, no irritation and no more embarrassing anxiety when you are at work or with your friends. With a healthy skin you can work with pleasure; you can join freely in sports, recreation and social activities with your friends; you can dress with pride; you can share the freedom and happiness of holidays, a new life is opened out to you.

Here is the opportunity you have sought. Send for Brochure and full particulars of Tremol Treatment. They are of vital importance to all Psoriasis sufferers. Do not despair and suffer needlessly. Write to-day enclosing 6d. in stamps. You will receive the Brochure and particulars by return of post. Address your letter to:—

**THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF HEALTH Ltd.**  
ENQUIRY DEPARTMENT & M.  
GREAT CLOWES STREET  
BROUGHTON, MANCHESTER, 7

"Why?"

Rik could not remember why. He had done it; he had hated to land on a planet; for some reason it had been necessary to stay in space; but he could not remember why. Again, he dodged the gap.

He said, "I had a job."

"Yes," she said. "You analyzed Nothing."

"That's right." He was pleased. "That's exactly what I did. Do you know what that means?"

"No."

He didn't expect her to understand, but he had to talk. He had to revel in memory, to delight drunkenly in the fact that he could call up past facts at the flick of a mental thumb and finger.

He said, "You see, all the material in the universe is made up of a hundred different kinds of substances. We call those substances, elements. Iron and copper are elements."

"I thought they were metals."

"So they are, and elements, too. Also oxygen, and nitrogen, carbon and palladium. Most important of all, hydrogen and helium. They're the simplest and most common."

"I never heard of those," Valona said, wistfully.

"Ninety-five per cent of the universe is hydrogen and most of the rest is helium—even space."

"I was once told," said Valona, "that space was a vacuum. They said that meant there was nothing there. Was that wrong?"

"Not quite. There's *almost* nothing there. But you see, I was a spatioanalyst, which meant that I went about through space collecting the extremely small amounts of elements there and analyzing it. That is, I decided how much was hydrogen, how much helium and how much other elements."

"Why?"

"Well, that's complicated. You see the arrangements of elements isn't the same everywhere in space. In some regions there is a little more helium than normal; in other places, more sodium than normal; and so on. These regions of special analytic make-up wind through space like currents. That's what they call them. They're the currents of space. It's important to know how these currents are arranged because that might

explain how the universe was created and how it developed."

"How would it explain that?"

Rik hesitated. "Nobody knows exactly."

He hurried on, embarrassed that this immense store of knowledge in which his mind was thankfully wallowing could come so easily to an end marked, "unknown," under the questioning of . . . of— It suddenly occurred to him that Valona, after all, was nothing but a Florinian peasant girl.

He said, "Then, again, we find out the density, you know, the thickness, of this space-gas in all regions of the galaxy. It's different in different places and we have to know exactly what it is in order to allow ships to calculate exactly how to jump through hyperspace. It's like—" His voice squeaked and died away.

Valona stiffened and waited uneasily for him to continue, but only silence followed. Her voice sounded hoarsely in the complete darkness.

"Rik? What's wrong, Rik?"

Still silence. Her hands groped to his shoulders, shaking him. "Rik! Rik!"

And it was the voice of the old Rik, somehow, that answered. It was weak, frightened, its joy and confidence vanished.

"Lona. We did something wrong."

"What's the matter? We did what wrong?"

The memory of the scene in which the Patroller had shot down the Baker was in his mind, etched hard and clear, as though called back by his exact memory of so many other things.

He said, "We shouldn't have run away. We shouldn't be here on this ship."

He was shivering uncontrollably, and Valona tried futilely to wipe the moisture from his forehead with her hand.

"Why?" she demanded. "Why?"

"Because we should have known that if the Baker were willing to take us out in daylight, he expected no trouble from Patrollers. Do you remember the Patroller? The one who shot the Baker?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember his face?"

"I didn't dare look."

"I did, and there was something queer, but I didn't think. I didn't think. Lona, that *wasn't* a Patroller. It was the Townman, Lona, the Townman dressed like a Patroller."

# THE BIG HUNGER

By WALTER M. MILLER, JR.

*There was a Race, and its life-drive was Curiosity, and only Space was limited . . .*

I AM blind, yet I know the road to the stars. Space is my harp, and I touch it lightly with fingers of steel. Space sings. Its music quivers in the flux patterns, comes creeping along the twitch of a positron stream, comes to whisper in glass ears. I hear. Aiee! Though I am without eyes, I see the stars tangled in their field-webs, tangled into One. I am the spider who runs over the web. I am the spider who spins, spinning a space where no stars are.

And I am Harpist to a pale, proud Master.

He builds me, and feeds me the fuel I eat, and leads me riding through the space I make, to the glare of another sun. And when he is done with me, I lie rusting in the rain. My metal rots with ages, and the sea comes washing over land to take me while I sleep. The Master forgets. The Master chips flint from a stone, leaving a stone-axe. He busies himself with drums and bloody altars; he dances with a writhing snake in his mouth, conjuring the rain.

Then—a ter a long time—he remembers. He builds another of me, and I am the same, for like the Soul of him who builds me, my principle lies beyond particular flesh. When my principle is clothed in steel, we go wandering again. I the minstrel, with Man the king.

Hear the song of his hunger, the song of his endless thirst.

There was a man named Abe Jolie, and he leaned against me idly with one hand in the gloom while he spoke quietly and laughed with a female of his species.

"It's finished, Junebug. We got it made," he said.

And the girl looked her green eyes over me while the crickets sang beyond the wall, and while the shuffling of their feet echoed faintly in the great hangar.

"Fipished," she murmured. "It's your success, Abe."

"Mine, and a lot of others. And the government's money."

She toyed with the lapel of his coveralls, grinned, and said, "Let's steal it and run away."

"Ssshh!" He looked around nervously, but there were no guards in sight. "They can shoot you for less than that," he warned. "The S.P. doesn't have a sense of humor."

"Abe—"

"What?"

"Kiss me."

He kissed her.

"When is that going to be illegal, too?" she whispered.

He looked at her grimly, and she answered her own question.

"As soon as the eugenics laws are passed, Abe. Abe Jolie, who built the spacedrive, a genetic undesirable."

"Don't!"

They stood there breathing quietly, and there was hate in their throats.

"Well?"

He looked around again, and whispered, "Meet me here at eleven o'clock, Junebug."

The parted to the sound of casual footsteps.

At eleven o'clock, a lion roared in the hangar. At eleven o'clock a steel juggernaut tore through the hangar wall and paused on a concrete ramp while bullets ricocheted off the hull. Then the first star-chariot burnt a vertical column of flame in the night. Thunder walked upward on fiery stilts, while men shouted angrily. When we were alone in the airless, star-stung, sun-torn blackness, I stroked the web of space, and listened to the muted notes. When the tune is memorized, I speak. I contradict. I refute the universe. We lived in a spaceless space beyond stars.

The man and the woman had gone. But the plan remained on Earth. My principle lingered on the drawing boards, and in the dreams of men—men who said they were sick of wars and politics and the braying of collectivist jackasses. Others were sick of petty peace and cheapness and Independence Day speeches and incorporated jackasses who blubbered disgustingly about various freedoms.

They wanted the one Big Freedom. They built me again, these pale, proud bipeds,

these children of an Ape-Prince who walked like a god. They packed themselves in cylinders of steel and wandering, riding starward on a heart-tempest that had once sung them down from the trees to stalk the plains with club and torch. The pod of earth opened, scattered its seed spaceward. It was the time of the great bursting, the great birth-giving. Empires shivered in the storm.

Sky-chariots flung themselves upward to vanish beyond the fringes of the atmosphere. Prairie schooners of space bore the restless, the contemptuous, the hungry and the proud. And I led them along the self-road that runs around space. The world seethed, and empires toppled, and new empires arose whose purpose it was to build the sky-chariots.

Young men, young women, clamored at the gates of launching fields. Those who were chosen grinned expectantly at the stars. They climbed aboard in throngs and deserted Earth. They were hard laughers with red freckles and big fists. They wore slide rules at their belts like swords, and they spoke familiarly of Schwarzschild Line-Elements and Riemann-Christofel tensors. Their women were restless talkers, big women, with flashing white teeth. They teased the men, and their hands were strong and brown.

Poets came—and misfits, and saints, sinners, dirt-farmers. Engineers came, and child-bearers, fighters, utopianists, and dreamers with the lights of God glowing in their starward eyes.

"Why were we taught to pray with *downcast eyes*?" they asked. "When you pray, look starward, look to the God at the north end of the Universe."

Man was a starward wind, a mustard seed, a wisp of Brahma's breath breathed across space.

They found two corpses in an orbit about Arcturus. The corpses were frozen and the ice was slowly sublimating into space-vapor. One of them had an Engineering Union card in his pocket. It gave his name as Abe Jolie. The other was a girl. And, because the corpse had given them the blueprints that led to space, they hauled him aboard with the girl. Somebody sang the "Kyrie" and somebody said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Then they cancelled out the orbital velocity and let the corpses go toppling toward Arcturus, toward a burning sun-grave where their light would shine forever.

There were those who remained behind.

There were those who made Earth their business and stayed at home. Their tribes were numbered at two billion souls. And they were somehow different from the spacers. They liked to sit in their rocking chairs. They liked prettiness and a one-hundred cent dollar. They voted for the Conservative Party. They abolished centralization. Eventually they abolished government. And for the first time in anyone's memory, there was peace on Earth, good will among men.

My master was hungry for land. My Master sought new worlds. And we found them.

There was a yellow sun in Serpens called 27 Lambda, lying eight parsecs inward toward the galactic heartland and seven parsecs north toward the galactic pole. A lush green planet drifted at one hundred twenty mega-miles from the friendly sun-star, and it awoke in the wandering biped nostalgic thoughts. We paused in space-black, we looked, we came down on tongues of lightning from the clear sky to set jet-fires in the grassy plain near a river and a forest.

Man was a seed replanted.

He wandered away from the sky-chariot and drank from a pool in the jungle. A behemoth with several legs and a parasite-rider came roaring his appetite at the pale biped. And his bones lay whitening in the sun, and his descendants learned that it was easier to stay alive by ignoring the biped from the sky.

I lay rusting in the rain. Houses of log and stone grew up on the hillsides. They crumbled slowly into ruin. A man wearing a fur robe came and built an altar at my feet. He burnt his eldest daughter on it while he sang a battle song and danced, danced a victory under strange sky.

The sons of men molded clay and chipped arrowheads and built fires. The old men told them stories of a space-going god, and the stories became their legends. They kidnapped the daughters of neighbors, knew wives, and multiplied.

A glacier came and ground me into dust. Millenniums passed, and each Prophet had his Hazard.

One of the prophets wrote an energy equation. Men crucified an Agitator on a telegraph pole. They purged a minority-group. They split a uranium atom into atoms of strontium and xenon. They wrote immortal lines deploring war while they invented better ways to wage it. They re-fashioned a body for my life-principle, for

the tensor-transforms that constitute my soul. They mounted me again in a sky-borne prairie schooner because they were weary of sanctified braying.

There were growling columns of blue-white fire in the night, and growling voices of restless masses of men. Men darted along the road around space.

Men departed for other stars. But after a thousand years, many remained on the planet of their birth—homebodies and movie-idols and morticians, nembatal-addicts and advocates of world-government.

When the restless ones, the wild-eyed spacers were gone, the addicts got religion and the federalists became placid anarchists and the Parliaments voted themselves out of existence. There was peace of the third planet of 27 Lambda Serpentis, and good will among the inhabitants thereof. They made love and studied sociology under a friendly sun, under a pleasant blue sky forever.

On the road around space, my Master hungered for land.

And there was a yellow sun in the region of the Scorpion, and once it had been called 18 Scorpii, but now they named it Ba'Lagan. It was a little south of Serpens, a little nearer to the galactic nucleus. They named its planets Albrasa and Nynfi, and they were twins. Albrasa was already populated by a clan of hairy intellectuals with teeth and twittering voices. They liked the flavor of man-flesh, digested it easily.

Man came down on sky-lightning. Man came down to walk on the land and own it. I lay quietly rusting in the rain.

Man taught his grandson to hammer virgin copper into a vicious battle-axe, and taught him the mystic recipe for roasting a hairy intellectual. It was forbidden to boil a young intellectual in the milk of its mother, but it was permissible to roast it alive and remind it that its fathers had dared to attack a two-legged god.

Man's grandson waxed strong and malicious. He committed genocide on the furry natives and used their skins for blankets. He shattered their brain-cases and erected his own altars in their temples. He butchered an octogenarian on one of the altars, because the old man had made the silly suggestion that they sacrifice a perfectly healthy young virgin to their god. The young virgin watched the ceremony with quietly triumphant eyes; then she married the chief priest and bore him many children.

The biped bludgeoned the planet into

submission. He assured himself that he was the Chosen Child of the Most High. He built himself a throne and sat upon it—while he listened to a newscaster describe jet-battles over the North Pole. Centuries wandered by, decked in gaudy robes. And there was a war with Nynfi between the worlds.

And then another Abraham Jolie bent over his drawing board. Another crew of big-fisted men wrapped steel flesh around my principle. Another race of men spat contempt on the soil—the soil that had drunk the blood of their fathers, felt the fire of the suns as the rockets heaved skyward bearing my body and the bodies of my Master.

Men were steel-jacketed motes of flesh, scurrying among the stars. Men were as dust, rolling across the galactic prairie—bits of dandelion fluff whirling in a rising tempest that bore them along the arm of the galactic spiral and inward, ever inward. Their eyes were on Hercules and the far-distant globular clusters. He paused at Nu Lupi and 15 Sagittae and a nameless yellow sun in Ophiuchus where he met a native race who dared to be bipeds. He crushed them quickly.

There were always those who remained behind, lingered on the planets where their ancestors had fought. I watched them with my last eyes as the last ship hurtled into space. I watched, and saw the lust go out of them, saw them become as a cauldron removed from the fire. Their boiling waned to a simmer, and they cooled. They always found peace when the spacers were gone.

This I have never understood. I, the machine, the space-spider, cannot understand. But I have seen it—the exodus of the hungry, the settling of peace over those who chose to linger. The hungry drink of the emptiness of space, and their hunger grows. The placid eat of the earth, and find peace, yet somehow—they seem to die a little.

Ever deeper pressed the starships, deeper into Sagittarius and Scorpius, and Lupus, Ophiuchus and Sagitta. Now and then they paused to colonize and conquer. A planet devoured a handful of men and tormented them with its biological devices. But the men grew and beat the savage planet into a slave, after long ages, forced it to pay tribute to its king. Once more they coveted the stars. Once more they darted heavenward, leaving reluctant brothers in peace.

They wrote a song. They called it "Ten



Parsecs to Paradise." They sang the song as if they relived it. This I have never understood.

It was always ten or twelve parsecs to another sun with a class G spectrum, with a planet chastely clad in green forests and white clouds. There he landed to rebuild, to furrow the fertile earth, to rock in a porch swing at twilight sucking his pipe, and thoughtfully staring at the stars while his grandchildren romped like young chimpanzees on the cool lawn.

He had forgotten Earth—this old man—his race had forgotten its history. But he knew a little. He knew the star-going cycle—the landing of the starships, the regression to savagery, the painful rebuilding, the cruelty, the re-learning, the proud exodus. He knew these things because Man had learned to keep a little of the past intact throughout a cycle. He no longer fell back to chipping arrowheads. Now he managed to begin again in an age of bronze or soft iron. And he knew in advance that he would carve mighty industries out of savage wilderness.

But the old man was sad as he sat on his porch. He knew so little of the Great Purpose. Why must his seed fling itself starward? He knew that it *must*—but he lacked a reason. His grandchildren played in the twilight, played space-games, although there was not yet a starship on the planet.

There was a small boy on the lawn who tried to tease the girls, but the girls put on masks of superior sophistication and ignored the little man. Disgruntled, he looked up and saw the old man dreaming on the porch.

"Gramp's got star-craze!" he shrieked. "Look at Gramp menting! Nnyahh! Gramp's got star-craze."

Musical laughter tittered over the lawn. Another voice took up the cry. The old man chuckled affectionately but wistfully. They were young, but they knew about the star-thirst. The planet was young, too young for star-ships, even though the priests preserved the records and scientific writings in the temples. The planet knew about space and coveted it. Yet, the children would all be dead before the first vessel was launched.

The laughter on the lawn subsided. The eldest child, a gawky and freckled girl of eight years came trudging up the steps to sit against the post and stare at him quietly in the gloom. He felt a question lurking in her silence. He nudged her ribs affectionately with his toe.

"What weighty matter worries you, Nari?" he asked pleasantly.

"What is star-craze, Gramp?"

He rocked thoughtfully for a moment. "Why are there men to feel it?" he countered.

The child was silent.

"I know only what the priests say, Nari," he told her gently. "They say that man once owned a paradise planet, and that he ran away in search of a better one. They say he made the Lord Bion angry. And the lord hid the paradise, and condemned Man to forever wander, touched his heart with eternal hunger for the place he lost."

"Will people find it again, Gramp?"

"Never—so the priests say. The hunger is on him, Nari."

"It's not fair!" said the little girl.

"What isn't, my child?"

"Star-craze. Last night I saw a lady crying."

"Where?"

"On the street. Waiting for a motor bus."

"How old was she?"

Nari scraped her heels and muttered doubtfully. "It was kind of dark."

Gramp chuckled reassuringly. "I bet she wasn't over fourteen. I bet she was still a kid. Star-craze comes to little girls about the time they start being interested in little boys. Works the other way, too. But you grow out of it, Nari. By the time you're twenty, it won't make you miserable any more. It gives you a goal. Gives everyone a goal. Something to work for. Something to long for and fight for. The stars—you'll want to give them to your grandchildren."

"Won't I get to go?"

"Not ever, Nari."

They fell silent again, and the old man peered up into the deepening blackness with its countless array of suns sitting like hens on their nests of planets. He scarcely believed the legend of the lost paradise-planet, but it was a good story to tell little girls. It made him sad though, and revived a little of the forgotten restlessness of his youth. If only he could have lived two centuries later—

But then a gust of wind brought the sweet perfume of freshly cut hay from the field to the east of the farmhouse, and the odor made him smile. The field would have to be raked tomorrow, and the hay brought in to the barn. A lot of things like that needed to be done before the starships could rise again. And every straining muscle helped toward the ultimate goal. The hay

fed the animals whose flesh fed the men who made the tools which built the factories which fashioned more complicated tools—and so the journey, down the long road to space again.

The old man didn't know why the road had to be traveled, nor did he really care. The road was there, and it beckoned, and it gave meaning to life, for surely the Lord Bion was less cruel a tempter than the priests sometimes proclaimed him. Surely there was something more than despair at the end of the long, long road.

The old man grew older, and died peacefully, and his ashes were scattered across the fields he had tilled since boyhood. His children, and his grandchildren, followed in his patient steps, and their ashes were mingled with his own before the first gleaming sky-craft burst star-fire in the night.

When the skycraft at last rumbled upward, the crowd thundered a triumphant roar, the crowd gathered to witness the culmination of their labors, and the labors of their ancestors. Men walked with shoulders erect and with pride glowing in their faces. Again they triumphed over forces that held them bound to a grain of sand in the sky. Again they slashed through the knot that held them in the web of the continuum, and shed the weights that dragged at their feet.

I noticed a subtle difference in those who lingered behind. They no longer lingered of their own choosing. They were no longer the peace-seekers and the placid ones. They were those who could not go because they were old, or sick, or because the industries were half-deserted and there was no one left to build the ships. They still stared longingly upward on dark nights.

"We'll do it again," they promised. "We'll repopulate and do it again."

But the bitterness of their plight was upon them, a sense of defeat and doom. They fought savagely among themselves. They fell in feudal wars, while the starward wave receded.

I am the acolyte of the space-priest, the server of the pale proud biped. I have taken him onward across the void, to the Hercules Cluster, and beyond it to the uncharted regions past the dust clouds of the Great Rift, into the star-pact heartland of the galactic nucleus where other races were testing their space wings and tasting of the great freedom. I have watched him, and have felt the life-aura of his longing. And I have wondered. What is his goal? Where is an answer to his hunger?

My neural circuits are not of flesh. My circuits are of glass and steel. My thought is a fanning electron stream. But I have prayed. I, the spider who builds around space, have prayed to the gods of the biped I serve. I have prayed to the God of the North End of Space. I have asked, "Where is his peace?"

*No answer came.*

I have seen my Master change.

The biped was thunder across the galaxy. The biped was a swift and steel-clad spear hurtling ruthlessly onward. He made no friends; for he came as a being who owned the stars, and he took what he wanted along the way. He left his seed to grow anew. A creature of fierce pride! And fiercer longing. He trampled hatelessly such races as he encountered. He crushed them, or harnessed them to his plow, or borrowed their neural circuits for his bio-computers. Sometimes he fought against his own race, men who had traveled other routes to the galactic heartland. When man battled against man, they fought with hatred and cruelty and bitterness—but never with contempt. Man saw a rival king in man. Against other races, he waged only cool contempt and hot death.

Sometimes a thoughtful old man would say, "Seems to me they've got as much right to live as we have. Seems to me all intelligent creatures have got a common denominator. God, maybe." But he muttered it quietly, speculatively. Even if he believed it, he never objected to the swift ambush of the alien ship, nor to the razing of the alien city. For the biped stalked a new frontier. The ape-tribe stole across a field where danger lurked. He was fresh from the branches of the trees, not wise to the ways of the plains. How could he risk offering peace to the shaggy beast who crouched in the tall grass? He could only weigh the odds—then strike or run away.

He took the planets of the yellow suns—deep in the galactic heartland. He skipped from one to the next in jumps as long as his patience would last. He captured the globular clusters. He inhabited each planet for a few generations. He built ships, and battled with his brothers for the right to take them. Many were left behind. They repopulated after an exodus, rebuilt, launched a second flight, and a third—until those who finally remained at home were those who lacked the incentive of the big hunger.

Those who lacked incentive sought their

peace. They molded a pleasant place to live in and infested it. Or else they scorned pleasantries and made themselves a battleground.

My Master is the Nomad, gaunt and tall. My Master grits his teeth in staring at the stars, and his eyes go narrow and moist. I have mirrored his hunger, have allowed his life-aura to seep into the cold steel and hot glass of me, have reflected his thoughts in my circuits. Sometimes he wonders if I am alive. But then he remembers that he built me. He built me to think, not to be alive. Perhaps I am not alive, but only a mirror that catches a little of my Master's life. I have seen him change.

The spearhead groups pushed relentlessly across the gleaming blackness, and each generation grew more restless than the one before it. The restless moved ahead. The contented remained at home. Each exodus was a separation, and a selection of the malcontent.

The biped came to believe his priests. He believed the legend of the lost home. He believed that Bion had touched him with the hunger curse. How else could they explain the pressing cry of the heart? How could they interpret the clamor of the young, the tears—except as a Divine Thirst.

The star-craze. The endless search.

There was a green planet beyond the heartland, and it was ripe for bursting its human star-seed. There was a launching field, and a ship, and teeming crowd, and a fence with guards to keep the others out. A man and a girl stood at the fence, and it was nearly dawn.

He touched her arm and gazed at the shadows on the launching site.

"We won't find it, Marka," he said quietly. "We'll never find it."

"You believe the legend, Teris?" she whispered.

"The Planet of Heaven? It's up there. But we can never find it."

"Then why must you look?"

"We are damned, Marka."

There was a silence, then she breathed, "It *can* be found. The Lord Bion promised—"

"Where is *that* written, Marka?" he scoffed coldly.

"In a woman's heart."

Teris laughed loudly. "What does the heart-writing say?"

She turned to stare at the dark shadow of the ship against the graying sky. "It says: 'When Man is content—without his lost

paradise—when he reconciles himself—Bion will forgive, and show us the road home.'"

He waved his hand fiercely at the fading stars in the west. "*Ours*, Marka. They're ours! We took them."

"Do you want them?"

He stiffened angrily and glared at the shadow of her face. "You . . . you make me sick. You're a hang-backer."

"No!" She shook her head wildly. "*No!*" She caught at his arm as he retreated a step. "I wish I could go! I want to go, do you hear?"

"I hear," he snapped. "But you can't, so there's no use talking about it. You're not well, Marka. The others wouldn't let you aboard." He backed away another step.

"I love you," she said frantically.

He turned and stumbled away toward the sky-chariot.

"I love you!"

He began to trot, then burst into a wild sprint. Afraid, she thought in triumph. Afraid of turning back. Of loving her too much.

"*You'll never find it!*" she screamed after him. "*You can't find it up there! It's here—right here!*"

But he was lost in the crowd that milled about the ship. The ship had opened its hatches. The ship was devouring the people, two at a time. The ship devoured Teris and the space crew. Then it closed its mouth and belched flame from its rockets.

She gasped and slumped against a fence-post. She hung there sobbing until a guard drove her away.

A rocket bellowed the space song. The girl tore off her wedding bracelet and flung it in the gutter. Then she went home to fix breakfast for the children.

I am the Weaver of space. I am a Merchant of new fabrics in flux patterns for five-space continua. I serve the biped who built me, though his heart be steeped in hell.

Once in space, a man looked at me and murmured softly, "You are the cross on which we crucify ourselves."

But the big hunger pushed him on—on toward the ends of space. And he encountered world where his ancestors had lived, and where his peaceful cousins still dwelt in symbiosis with their neighbors. Some of the worlds were civilized, some barbaric, and some were archaeological graveyards. My nomads, they wore haunted faces as they re-explored the fringes of the galaxy

where Man had walked before, leaving his footprints and his peace-seeking children. The galaxy was filled.

*Where could he go now?*

I have seen the frantic despair in their faces when, upon landing, natives appeared and greeted them politely, or tried to kill them, or worshipped them, or just ran away to hide. The nomads lurked near their ships. A planet with teeming cities was no place for a wanderer. They watched the multifaceted civilizations with bitter, lonely eyes.

Where were new planets?

Across the great emptiness to the Andromeda galaxy? Too far for the ships to go. Out to the Magellanic clouds? Already visited.

Where then?

He groped blindly, this biped. He had forgotten the trail by which his ancestors had come, and he kept recrossing it, finding it winding everywhere. He could only plunge aimlessly on, and when he reached the last limit of his fuel—land. If the natives could not provide the fuel, he would have to stay, and try to pass another cycle of starward growth on the already inhabited world. But a cycle was seldom completed. The nomads intermarried with the local people; the children, the hybrid children, were less steeped in hunger than their fathers. Sometimes they built ships for economic purposes, for trade and commerce—but never for the hysterical starward sweep. They heard no music from the North End of Space, no Lorelei call from the void. The craving was slowly dying.

They came to a planet. The natives called it "Earth." They departed again in cold fright, and a space commander blew out his brains to banish the memory. Then they found another planet that called itself "Earth"—and another and another. They smiled again, knowing that they would never know which was the true home of Man.

They sensed the nearness of the end.

They no longer sang the old songs of a forgotten paradise. And there were no priests among them. They looked back at the Milky Way, and it had been their royal road. They looked ahead, where only scattered stars separated them from the intergalactic wasteland—an ocean of emptiness and death. They could not consign themselves to its ultimate embrace. They had fought too long, labored too hard to surrender willingly to extinction.

But the cup of their life was broken.

And to the land's last limit they came.

They found a planet with a single moon, with green forests, with thin clouds draping her gold and blue body in the sunlight. The breath of the snowking was white on her ice caps, and her seas were placid green. They landed. They smiled when the natives called the planet "Earth." Lots of planets claimed the distinction of being Man's birthplace.

Among the natives there was a dumpy little professor—still human, though slightly evolved. On the night following the nomad's landing, he sat huddled in an easy-chair, staring at the gaunt nomadic giant whose bald head nearly touched the ceiling of the professor's library. The professor slowly shook his head and sighed.

"I can't understand you people."

"Nor I you," rumbled the nomad.

"Here is Earth—yet you won't believe it!"

The giant snorted contemptuously. "Who cares? Is this crumb in space the fulfillment of a dream?"

"You dreamed of a lost Earth-paradise."

"So we thought but who knows the real longing of a dream? Where is its end? Its goal?"

"We found ours here on Earth."

The giant made a wry mouth. "You've found nothing but your own smug existence. You're a snake swallowing its tail."

"Are you sure you're not the same?" purred the scholar.

The giant put his fists on his hips and glowered at him. The professor whitened.

"That's untrue," boomed the giant. "We've found nothing. And we're through. At least we went searching. Now we're finished."

"Not you. It's the *job* that's finished. You can live here and be proud of a job well done."

The giant frowned. "Job? *What* job?"

"Why, fencing in the stars. Populating the galaxy."

The big man stared at him in horrified amazement.

"Well," the scholar insisted, "you did it, you know. Who populates the galaxy now?"

"*People like you.*"

The impact of the searing words brought a sick gasp from the small professor. He was a long moment in realizing their full significance. He wilted. He sank lower in the chair.

The nomad's laughter suddenly rocked the room. He turned away from his victim and helped himself to a tumbler of liqueur.

He downed it at a gulp and grinned at the professor. He tucked the professor's liqueur under his arm, waved a jaunty farewell, and lumbered out into the night.

"My decanter," protested the professor in a whisper.

He went to bed and lay whimpering slightly in drowsiness. He was afraid of the tomorrows that lay ahead.

The nomads settled on the planet for lack of fuel. They complained of the climate and steadfastly refused to believe that it was Earth. They were a troublesome, boisterous lot, and frequently needed psychoanalysis for their various crimes. A provisional government was set up to deal with the problem. The natives had forgotten about governments, and they called it a "welfare commission."

The nomads who were single kidnapped native wives. Sometimes they kidnapped several, being a prolific lot. They begot many children, and a third-generation hybrid became the first dictator of a northern continent.

I am rusting in the rain. I shall never serve my priest here on Earth again. Nuclear fuels are scarce. They are needed for atomic warheads now zipping back and forth across the North Pole. A poet—one of the hybrids—has written immortal lines deploring war; and the lines were inscribed on the posthumous medal they gave his widow.

Three dumpy idealists built a spaceship, but they were caught and hung for treason. The eight-foot lawyer who defended them was also hung.

The world wears a long face; and the stars twinkle invitingly. But few men look upward now. Things are probably just as bad on the next inhabited planet.

I am the spider who walked around space. I, Harpist for a pale proud Master, have seen the big hunger, have tasted its red glow reflected in my circuits. Still I cannot understand.

But I feel there are some who understand. I have seen the pride in their faces. They walk like kings.

THE END.

## SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS FOR SALE

(Add 6d. per book postage)

Across the Space Frontier (Ed. Ryan)	21/-	Mastermind of Mars (Burroughs)	7/6
Adventures in Time and Space (anth.)	10/6	Marooned on Mars (Del Rey)	14/6
Adventures in Tomorrow (anth.)	10/6	New Tales of Space and Time (anth.)	10/6
Best Stf. Stories 1952 (anth.)	19/6	No Place Like Earth (anth.)	10/6
Blind Spot, The (Hall & Flint)	10/6	Possible Worlds of Stf. (anth.)	9/6
City (Simak)	18/6	Prelude to Space (Clarke)	10/6
Earthbound (Lesser)	14/6	Puppet Masters, The (Heinlein)	10/6
Find the Feathered Serpent (Hunter)	14/6	Robots Have No Tails (Padgett)	18/6
Five Against Venus (Latham)	14/6	Son of the Stars (Jones)	14/6
Foundation and Empire (Asimov)	18/6	The Starman (Brackett)	18/6
Galaxy Reader of Stf. (anth.)	9/6	Weapon Shops of Isher (Van Vogt)	9/6
Judgment Night (Moore)	23/6	Worlds Far From Here (Wheatley)	17/6
King Conan (Howard)	19/6	Year's Best Stf. Novels (anth.)	10/6

Send for free lists and details of Postal Loan Library, Magazine service, etc., from

## FANTASY BOOK CENTRE

52 STOKE NEWINGTON ROAD, LONDON, N.16.

Telephone: CLIssold 5541



# LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

By M. C. PEASE

*It's bad business trying to revolt when you can never get away with an underground. Communication is the essence of revolt—and the communication link he had was available to him because of a purpose no human would ever have guessed . . .*

STEVE REDLAND, K4976-aq94, sat slumped in his chair, staring with unseeing eyes at his inquisitor. His face was drawn and hollow, his lips slack with defeat. He was a young man but his face was old with pain. Even his mind crawled with the agonizing slowness produced by torture.

Opposite Steve behind the desk sat Klan. The Outlander looked almost human with only a faintly alien cast to his features. And a coldness to his eyes that suggested an inhuman cruelty. Or perhaps not cruelty, but only complete lack of sympathy. An unawareness of the humanness of those around him.

"Do you hear me, Steve Redland?" Klan asked. His voice was precise with only a trace of foreign accent. And it, like his eyes, was without warmth. "You are about to be released, but there are things I would say to you first. Do you hear me?"

Slowly Steve gathered what little remained of his strength. Finally he managed to croak: "Yes." The effort left him dizzy.

"Good." Klan smiled with his mouth. "You were brought in here ten days ago for failure to obey edict number L716/b."

With an effort, Steve nodded weakly.

"Good. And it is good, too, that you do not still beg the triviality of the offense, or claim that you acted in ignorance. Our analysis here has elicited from your subconscious a verbatim recall in which this edict was fully explained. You did then know your actions were contrary to edict. That this knowledge had been suppressed into the subconscious is of no significance. And that the offense itself was trivial is also of no importance. It is only pertinent that you did violate the edict." Klan leaned forward. His words were measured and distinct.

"We cannot tolerate violations," he went on. "There are not enough Overlords on Earth to permit us to tolerate even the most minor deviation. We dare not let

even the germ of revolution get started. If you Earthmen ever unite against us, we are lost. There are not even the weapons we used to subjugate Earth. They are busy elsewhere. Our only defense is to stamp out even the smallest hint of aberration. We cannot let pass the slightest sign that an Earthman may have failed to submerge his will in ours. For such a man is a potential revolutionist. He has but to unite with others of his kind and he is dangerous to us."

The words beat in cadence on Steve's battered mind. He was incapable of response, and the words were accepted without knowledge of their meaning. Only later would he analyze them, wondering why they had been spoken. Right now they were simply remembered.

"We have studied you," Klan went on. "We have analyzed your motives and probed the depths of your being. We have discovered that your character has aspects that are potentially dangerous to us. The danger, however, is not a present one. Until you become dangerous, you will be useful to us. Therefore you will be allowed to go free. Let me warn you, however, that you will not be unwatched. At the slightest further symptom of deviation, you will be brought back here for further study. And I might add that very few have ever felt here twice in any normal way. On the second time, they are dead. Not always in flesh but at least in mind." His smile was as cold as the outer space from which he had come. "Your only hope will be to practice absolute conformity. We will still call you back eventually. We shall want to determine if the potentially dangerous aspects of your character have matured to the point where you should be eliminated. And we shall probably find that they have. But that is of no importance since there is nothing you can do about it. All you can accomplish is to defer the date until our ultimate pleasure. I advise you to make the effort."

Steve's mind swirled at the thought of returning to this building. He had no clear picture of what had been done to him, there. What images he had were blurred, anaesthetized with pain and maybe drugs. But there was a horror there that had no name, and did not need a form. It was a black thing, dredged from the blackness of insanity itself. And his mind shrank into a corner at the thought.

Behind the horror was hatred. This he was conscious of in a peculiar way as if it were something tangible and external to himself—something cold as ice with sharp and jagged edges. He hated this Overlord and he hated all the Overlords. He never had before and this was strange. He did not understand how he could ever have lived without this sharp bright hatred that lay outside his mind. He did not see how it could be that he had once accepted them. In a queer, dissociated way he remembered seeing the old people who had lived before the Outlanders came. He remembered them and recalled puzzling over their futile bitterness, wondering why they did not accept what had to be. He remembered this but did not remember why. He felt a kinship to them in the bright hatred that he knew lay deep in his mind, but that was without expression within him.

"To help you to conform for as long as you can, we will give you a new identity," Klan continued after a pause. "Fortunately you have not as yet established a permanent liaison with a woman of your race. We find that such are difficult to break for some peculiar reason. In your case we need simply move you to New York. We will give you papers that will show your name to be Steve Marcus. Your first name and your number can stay the same. You were a mathematician and you will continue to be one though you will be given a new work assignment. That, however, can wait. You will need time to recover from your experiences here. We will inform you after the appropriate interval. Do you have any questions before I have you taken to your new abode?"

Slowly Steve shook his head. The words meant nothing to him. His forward mind still lay in utter passivity. The subconscious that eddied about him was dark with moving things, but he did not heed them. He only knew he needed rest. And it did not matter if he made no sense of Klan's

words now or of the thoughts that stirred within him. They would be there when he had rested. And then there would be time enough.

He was aware that others came and got him, and led him out. And he was aware that, as he left, Klan spoke into a speaker on the desk. But the words, being in the Outlander's tongue, meant nothing to him. He did not even know that Klan was dictating a report on him. If he had known, he might have been curious as to why he was of interest to Igor, Chief Co-ordinator, Project Earth. But he did not know.

*Interoffice Memo.*

To: Igor

Subject: Steve Redland/Marcus K4976-aq94

Date: August 10

I am calling Your Exalted Highness' attention to the referenced individual. Psychological tests have indicated that he is capable of becoming a Prime Focus Entity. He can think for himself and, in fact, is of the kind that is incapable of not thinking. He will accept the conclusions of others to only a limited degree as tentative hypotheses. In accordance with the normal pattern of such individuals, he is disinclined to act, being overly aware of the possible alternatives to any given course of action. He will therefore require guidance and pressure. But in this he conforms to the general pattern of Prime Focus Entities.

Initial steps have been taken. He has been properly indoctrinated and provided with the thalamic incentive. He has been prepared for establishment in the topological environment that will accomplish the purpose. Step One is therefore completed and Step Two has been initiated.

I trust these arrangements will meet Your Majesty's approval. Your Highness expressed considerable dissatisfaction with our choice of the previous Prime Focus Entity. While acknowledging that that individual did not prove satisfactory, I will point out that he was selected according to the procedure established by Yourself. If Your Majesty can suggest any changes or improvements in the procedure, I beg Your Majesty's indulgence and request that I be informed of same!

Klan.

How long it was before Steve awoke he

# EIGHT GLANDS CONTROL YOUR DESTINY

*and Gland Regeneration is now within your power*

MODERN SCIENCE laid its hand on the kernal of all human life—glands. Through glandular regeneration it opened up new horizons in every new activity. These are the simple facts. All your activities and your physical and mental characteristics; your height, your weight, your temper, depend upon the action of your ENDOCRINE or DUCTLESS glands. These glands, as well as having independent functions, work together as a system. Their secretions, circulated through your blood stream, dominate all your energies—mental, physical and nervous.

A man is as old as his glands . . . On the strength and the balance of these secretions depends your strength. Your power can be at its height only when your glands are functioning rightly. Weakness is as much the result of ill-balance as of deficiency. But ill-balance or deficiency—it can be cured by Hormone Therapy.

Do you suffer from premature ageing, loss of energy and vitality, weakness, tiredness, sleeplessness, poor appetite, bodily aches and pains, failing eyesight, falling hair, nerves, neurasthenia, brain-fag, nervous digestive disorders, partial or total loss of virile tone? In fact are your energies co-ordinated? All these conditions are

symptoms of deficiency or bad balance which can only be treated through your glands.

**HORMONE THERAPY** or Gland Therapy is the science of rejuvenation through the regeneration of the glands. It works on the opposite principle to drugs—it refurnishes and does not merely stimulate your vital energies. It goes right to the core of physical, mental or nervous weakness. It has been proved that they give back the fullness of energy which, through illness, age or even chronic weakness, has been lost.

**What it can do for Women.** Hormone Therapy has found the cure to many of the functional disturbances which accompany the change of life.

**New Life.** British Glandular Products are here for your benefit. If you recognise in yourself any of the symptoms mentioned above or, particularly, if you have tried other treatments without success, we know we can help you to new co-ordination and new virility. We know—because we've helped thousands before. Fill in the coupon below and enclose 3d. stamp for booklet, "The Essence of Life."

## BRITISH GLANDULAR PRODUCTS

To British Glandular Products Limited (A.A.M.L.), 37 Chesham Place, London, S.W.1. Please send me, without obligation, your booklet, "ESSENCE OF LIFE," for which I enclose 3d. in stamps, postage free, or send me (a) 100 "TESTRONES" Brand Tablets (Male), or (b) 100 "OVERONES" Brand Tablets (Female), for which I enclose 15s. Please strike out Tablets not required.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

did not know. When he did, it was evening. He felt ill as he pushed himself up sitting. His eyes were glazed as they looked around the room peering through the gathering darkness. It was not his own—or rather, he supposed it was his own. But it was not the one he had had before they had taken him for "interrogation." But the difference was small. Most of the cities had had to be almost completely rebuilt after the Outlanders had come. There had been little left of them after the careless thoroughness with which the invaders had suppressed all opposition. And the rebuilt cities had been made to a single pattern. All over the world single men of about his age lived in rooms that were almost identical with this. Those of the lower grades would have a smaller rug, or one of dingier hue. At most they had a window less. Those of higher grade might have a little more. But very little. He could feel at home in any of them. Or none.

There were sandwiches on the table. He was hungry, he discovered, so he ate. He wondered if he should thank the Outlanders, but decided with a twisted smile against it. This, no doubt, was simple routine. Designed to keep him from starving to death before he got sufficient command of himself to realize of his own accord that he was hungry. A matter of protecting their investment while he "continued to be useful" to them. The echo of Klan's words came back to him.

As if the remembered words were the key, he suddenly knew that he had only a single purpose left in life—to destroy Outlanders. The fury of his hatred swept over him in waves that left him gasping. His face twisted uncontrollably and his hands ground the sandwich to shreds. But then the violence of his emotion left him and it became the cold, clear purpose of destruction. He looked at his hand. It was steady. It would, he thought, hold a gun, when the time came. But it would sit, relaxed and quiet, until the time should come. His face, that had been twisted with fury, was calm, and almost gentle.

He lay back down on the bed and went to sleep.

"Is he awake, yet?" The voice was that of a girl. It was soft but vibrant. Alive and aware. Steve smiled in pleasure at it while he wondered who she was.

"I don't know. Should I care?" A man's

voice answered. It was curt and gruff. Bored, almost.

"Don't you care?" the girl asked. "I should think you would. A new personality. A new friend. A new part of you."

"And a new traitor." The man's voice was bitter. "Or a new coward. Somebody else to bring Them down on us. I care, but I am not pleased."

"What do you want, then? Shall we go on in our present futile way until, one by one, we are destroyed? Shall we fear each new face as a new betrayer? Or shall we hope it is the face of the one who can give the answer?" She sounded weary as if this were an ancient argument.

"You are naïve but there is no point in arguing it." The man almost audibly shrugged. "He is here and that is that. The question, I think, was whether he is awake."

Steve opened his eyes prepared to answer for himself. But he did not say the words that were on his lips for there was no one there. He sat up and looked around his room. There were no signs of anyone but himself. "Hello?" he asked. He heard the sound with surprise, with shock almost, for it made him realize that the voices he had heard had had no sound. He wondered if he were crazy but then he shrugged. Anyone, he thought, was entitled to hear voices after being "interrogated."

He got up and walked to the window and stood there looking out. The massively intricate building of monotonous style reassured him. Without liking the style, it still was what he knew. It was not his original city, but he remembered Klan had said he would be taken to New York, and it made no difference anyway. The only thing that might have made a difference was the loss of all his friends. He remembered with particular regret a girl named Joan. He had come close to establishing, as Klan had put it, a permanent liaison with her. But the regret was only that for things that are past. He realized with some surprise that if he could go back there, to Joan and to his friends, he still would not. They were as toys of his childhood, put away now, with regret but with finality. They could not be a part of his present. They could not for they were from the days when he had accepted the Outlanders. And now that his purpose was that of hatred, and theirs was not,

they could have no part. It was a cold and icily bitter thought.

He returned to the bed and lay down, staring at the ceiling. He wanted to think. This shining anger at the Outlanders that he had just rediscovered still startled him. He was not used to it. It required that he re-orient his whole philosophy. It demanded a re-evaluation of all else in terms of its own existence. And it had to be explored itself.

He lay there, studying his own mind. Suddenly, he was aware of the voices again. He could not quite hear them, but he knew that they were there. It was as if they were around a corner that he could not quite locate. He strained to hear, but then the voices faded clean away.

He sat up and picked up the pillow, thinking to see some microphone but there was none. He stood up and lifted first the head and then the foot of the bed, expecting to see some wires. There was nothing there. He sat down again, puzzled.

As he sat there, the awareness returned. This time he did not try to locate the voices. He did not even try to hear them. He tried to feel their quality. As he did so, he realized that they were not of sound. They were in his head, and only in his head. He laughed aloud at the thought of himself seeking wires to explain an hallucination. He laughed and relaxed.

"No, you idiot." It was the girl's voice with a mixture of exasperation and amusement. "I will not be brushed off as an hallucination."

He tensed again, the voice was so very real. It frightened him a bit but then he chuckled. If it were someone else who was hearing voices, the standard advice would be to humor the poor soul. But how, he wondered, do you humor yourself?

"By accepting it," the voice answered. "But not being so sure you know everything. So lie down. Relax. And let me talk." Her voice was belligerent in an exasperated way.

He thought about it a moment. But then he decided that he would have no rest until he did listen—until he did humor himself. So he relaxed and announced loudly in his own mind: "O.K. Talk."

"You are not hearing voices," was the answer. "I mean, not dream voices. I am real. I am a girl named Nancy and if you were here. I could show you how real I

am. This is telepathy and we can talk through our minds and there is nothing very unusual about it."

"You don't call it unusual?" Steve asked, mentally. It was only then that he realized he was accepting this. But then, he asked himself, what could he do? The voice was there and there was not much point in arguing with himself about it. "It's not unusual?" he asked again.

"No, not particularly," she answered. "There are, I think, quite a number of us. All spread out. Each of us only able to talk to a few. Like I know only four besides you. But it's been going on for some time."

"But why—?" Steve could not decide which question to ask first.

"Why, for instance, do you find this only now?" she filled in. "Apparently it's got to do with the 'interrogation.' Something they do to us maybe tunes us in. Anyway, we have been interrogated. And as to all the other why's, like why can we each only talk with a few others, or why don't the Outlanders know about it—except, of course, they do only they don't know what to do about it—and so forth and so on, I don't know."

"And why do people keep jabbering on at all is one that I don't understand." The voice was the man's that he had heard at first.

"Who was that?" Steve asked.

"Oh, do you hear him? That's Max and he doesn't like the world."

"What is there to like?" Max snarled. "When the Outlanders haul you in again, you won't find it so pleasant. And with all the jabbering you do, they won't have any trouble finding you. And the worst of it is that then they'll they'll find me." There was fear in his voice, even while it snarled. "And leave me out of your talk-talk. Just forget I spoke."

"What does he mean?" Steve asked. "What is he worried about?"

"The Overlords do their best to keep this broken up," she told him. "They pick us up as fast as they can locate us. And then that's the end. And they take you and question you and learn all about you in their own unsubtle way. And they learn about those you were linked with. Like if they pick you up, they will learn about Max and me. And any others you may contact. You will not be a traitor or a



coward. Max is being mean. But they will learn about us because they know very well how to question people. And then they will look for us."

"How long—?" Steve asked in his mind.

"That depends," she said. "You see I am Nancy, but I will not tell you what my last name is. I will not say what city I am in, nor where I work. You will know me well, but you will not be able to tell the Outlanders much that might help them. And if they get to you before they do to me, then right away it will not be the end for me."

"There are many of us?" he asked.

"I think so," she answered. "Nobody knows. Nobody knows much more than those he talks with. Nobody wants to know much more or then he'd carry too many lives on only his own good luck."

"But what do you do?" Steve asked. "How do you operate?"

"Operate?" Her voice in his mind sounded puzzled. "I don't know what you mean. I don't suppose we do 'operate.' What we do depends on ourselves. Mostly we just try and be friends. Let each other know he is not alone. Sometimes they don't even want that. Like Max, there."

"What makes him such a coward?" he asked.

"So I'm a coward," Max's voice roared in. "Don't start your crowing yet. Wait till you've sweated out a few nights waiting for Them to come and get you. Just wait and see how brave you are then." His voice changed to a whine. "It would be different if we could do anything. I don't need friends. She admits that's all the good this is. And I'd rather just be left alone—and alive. If anybody could figure out anything to do, I'd do it. But—" His voice stopped. There was a sudden tension in the air that lifted him to his feet in a crouch. Tension and sudden fear. "No!" Max suddenly screamed. "No! No! Oh please no! I haven't done anything. I wouldn't even talk to them. I just minded my own business. I haven't—" There was a sudden wrenching, a twisting, a pain that was not a pain. And there was nothing.

"Max?" Nancy called softly and with pity in her voice. "Max?"

"What happened?" Steve asked, sitting down with sudden exhaustion.

"They got him," she answered. "Poor Max. For all his fear and carefulness, they still came and got him. Poor little Max."

He could feel that she was crying, not in grief but in sorrow. In sorrow, perhaps, for the waste and the futility. For Max who had thought that he could trade this priceless gift of telepathic friendship for life, but had only lost both. For Max who had fled but had had no place to hide.

As he sat on the bed, meditating, Steve pitied Max, too. But mostly he felt only anger. Anger and a hatred that throbbed deep within him, building up slowly, focusing with bright purpose on the Outlanders.

#### *Interoffice Memo.*

*To: Igor*

*Subject: Steve Redland/Marcus K4976-aq94*

*Date: August 12*

*Your Highness will remember that the subject individual has been selected for development into a Prime Focus Entity. Step Two is now completed, and the subject appears to have fully evaluated its lesson. He has also fully maintained his thalamic incentive on the subacute level. The basis is also being laid, however, for creating the necessary urgency at the appropriate time. Development is therefore proceeding satisfactorily. Step Three may be initiated.*

*In reply to Your Majesty's recent memo, we have complied with your instructions. If Your Highness will permit, I would like to take exception to Your Majesty's further comments, however. I fail to understand their purpose. Does Your Majesty expect that, if I were "spying" for the Council, I would admit it? I do categorically deny it, but I fail to see how Your Majesty can expect me to do otherwise.*

*Klan.*

In the days that followed, Steve's horizons expanded. One by one he learned to contact several more people. First there was Phil, a quiet lad of steady purpose. Not one, Steve judged, to panic easily. Not too bright, perhaps. There was something almost too methodical in the way he set about avoiding the Outlanders. A lack of inspiration, maybe. But Steve wished him the best and gave what advice he could.

Then later Quinn came in. He could talk both with Steve and Phil but neither of them much wished to talk to him. There was something evil in him they could sense. It was not, Steve knew, the weakness that had been in Max. It was strength, but it was wrong, and they did not like him.

Finally there was Bob. Nancy, too, could talk with him, though only with some effort. Bob was young and brash. There was violence in his hatred of the Outlanders. A wildness, perhaps of youth, and a certain recklessness. But he was smart. He had survived quite a while, he told Steve. And he intended to survive some more.

And as Steve's mental world expanded, he found the life his body lived was of less and less interest to him. The Outlanders had given him a few days to rest, and then assigned him to a job. He did his work with competence and skill, but with complete indifference. And he moved among the people of the city without interest. They were strangers and he had no contact with them. Even those he worked with seemed distant to him. He could not feel their minds and know their instant mood. He could not get to know them.

It was as if, he thought, each individual was a jewel, or something else compact and delicate and subtle. And as if he were a blind man trying to learn the subtleties of these separate jewels. A blind man who was constrained to keep on mittens while studying most of them, but who could throw aside the mittens when it came to those called Nancy, Phil, Quinn, and Bob. Only with those four did he have a true sense of knowing what they were. It was a strange feeling, he thought. Millions of people but only four that he could know. And even though he knew these four, yet he knew nothing about them, except what was important. Where they were, what they looked like, what they did, and all the other unimportant details, he did not know. All he knew was them.

"Even me," Quinn broke in on his reverie. "Even me you know. And you would rather talk to me than to any of a million other people. And me you don't like. Now isn't that curious?" His voice was taunting.

"Yes, it is," Steve answered. He was seated at the table in his room having breakfast. "I don't trust you. I feel that you could do some very bad things. And I don't like the feeling. It makes my skin crawl. But I would rather talk with you than with anybody else except the other three."

Quinn chuckled. "You are a brutal chap. At least you don't try to be hypocritical. I rather like you for it. You're not like

Phil. Oh, not that he plays the hypocrite, either. But he would not come right out and say a thing like that, either. He would just stay out of the way."

"Phil's a nice guy," Steve answered.

"Sure," Quinn said with sudden bitterness. "Nice guy. No nerve."

"No nerve?" Steve said. "I don't know. He may have more than you have. Sure he's running. Threw away his papers and beat it out. But not because he's afraid. Or any more afraid than you or I or any other of a few million other people. He's just trying to beat them the same as you or I. Maybe his way is a good one and maybe it's poor. But it doesn't show no nerve."

"Thanks, Steve," Phil's voice joined in. "But I can fight my own fights. At least I could if I could figure out how. But of course Quinn is safe as he very well knows. My telepathic powers are not yet good enough to knock his block off."

Quinn laughed, "That's one trouble with this business. No fun in insulting anyone as all they can do is insult you back. So I shall apologize. I shall drink a toast to you both. I shall drink it in the bitter wine of death and wish you Godspeed."

"Now see here—" Phil sputtered.

"No I do not choose to see there, my little cockinjay. I choose to sit here and rot. I curse you. I curse you both. And I curse myself the more." His voice trailed off in a sob.

"What is it?" Steve asked urgently. "Something's wrong. What's happened?"

"What's happened," Quinn laughed. He sounded a little mad. "What's happened is that in thirty seconds I shall be dead. I went to the Outlanders, you see. I went to them and offered them your lives. Your lives for mine. I thought it a reasonable trade. But they took your lives and now they will take mine. I told them all I knew of you. All your mannerisms, all the things that you let drop. I told them all I could. It was not an awful lot, but I think that you will see them soon because of it. I gave them you, but they would not give me me." He sobbed.

"Where are you now?" Steve asked.

"On the roof," Quinn replied. "They were planning to kill me. I broke away. I got through them to the roof, but they've got me cornered now. They're closing in. They're coming. They're—"

There was nothing more. Nothing more

at all except a kind of twisting, a pain that was not of the body, a subtle kind of wrenching.

"He's gone." Phil's voice was shocked.

"They killed him."

"Yes," Steve said. "They killed him. Even though he gave in to them, yes they killed him. They took what he offered. They took his soul. And then they killed him."

He pushed his breakfast away. He was not hungry.

#### *Interoffice Memo.*

To: Igor

Subject: Steve Redland/Marcus K4976-aq94

Date: August 19

Your Highness will be pleased to learn that the reference subject, designated for development into a Prime Focus Entity, has received Step Three and, so far as we are able to determine, has reacted according to plan. Furthermore all topological connections to complete the plan have now been made. Unless some unforeseen circumstance arises, it should be possible to complete the preliminary steps in the very near future.

In accordance with Your Majesty's request, I am sending a summary report on this subject. I am aware that Your Highness requested the complete file but wish to point out that for me to comply literally with Your Highness' request would make the continuation of this program impossible. I have therefore taken the liberty of accepting at face value the reason Your Highness gave for your request—that You wished to see if an alternate plan should be considered. For such a decision the summary enclosed will be found to be adequate.

Klan.

Steve sat in his chair that evening and pondered. Outside the lights of New York were going on, twinkling with their myriad pattern. But he sat in the dark, unseeing, thinking.

He was, he realized, one element of a vast network. A network of great potential power. He was beginning to suspect that the central problem was to find some way to translate that potentiality into a present reality.

How many thousand people were there in the net? Or was it millions? He did not

know. He only knew of three besides himself. Each of these three knew others—a few apiece. And those others knew still others. There was a connection but it served no useful purpose. Why not, he asked himself. What were the basic elements of the failure of the net?

A lack of single purpose would explain the failure. If the separate members of the net could not find a single common purpose, then of course they would not find any unity of action. Was this the explanation?

As a cause of failure, this explanation was not wholly unattractive. Max had tried to live by denying the existence of a threat to life. Quinn had tried to buy his life by joining with the enemy. With neither did he feel a common cause. He felt no urge at all to unite his actions with theirs. This could be it.

On further thought, however, he decided that this was no explanation. Both Max and Quinn had agreed that the main problem was the Outlanders. Both, he felt sure, would have acknowledged that the only good solution was to destroy and drive out the invaders. He rather thought that both, coward and traitor that they had been under the existing circumstances, still would have been happy to join in any plan to drive Them out. Even at the sacrifice of life itself. Coward and traitor that they were, he still thought they would have made the sacrifice. Only there was no plan. Failing to see any hope for the ideal solution, they had fallen back on mean and weak objectives. They had tried to save themselves. And it was only with these mean alternatives that he disagreed. No, he did not think there was a lack of common purpose. He did not think that was the answer.

He could assume then, he thought, that all want the same thing. Differences there might be. Some might prefer killing Outlanders while others might be content to see Them go. For himself his hatred was a cold and shining thing. It was a thing that was almost alien to him, a tool that would let him do what was not normal to his temperament. He could kill with it, and he could kill slowly and with relish. And he would have no pity because of it. But neither was it an all-consuming fire. It did not leave him off balance. It did not bring him to the all-important thing. Because of it, he would rather kill than not.

But if the price of freedom was to let Them leave in peace, then he could pay it cheerfully.

This was what he felt, but others might not feel the same. Others might need to kill. And still others might rather not. Like Nancy. She would not. But this was not important. The difference, here, was too small, too insignificant to count. There was a common purpose in spite of the slight differences.

"Sure, we're all in the same boat." It was Bob's voice that cut into his reverie. "And we'll all be hung with the same rope." His voice was violent. His self-control sounded very unsure.

"What do you think we should do?" Steve asked, mildly.

"I don't know." Bob's words were angry. "At least we ought to die like men. It's a cinch we're not doing anything now. And anything we do is better than this. Here we sit with our hands crossed, waiting for Them to come get us. What good does that do?"

"None," Steve admitted. "What good does it do to die?"

"What good does it do to live if you've got to do it hiding in corners, running from your own shadow? Why not prove yourself a man and strike a blow for freedom. What does it matter if you die, at least you've died a hero."

"Well, I don't know," Steve said. "I would sort of rather know what my dying accomplished, or might accomplish. Otherwise I'm allergic to it."

"Look, my friend," Bob cried, "this is the time of crisis. The longer we wait to act, the stronger they are, and the weaker we are. It's time to stand up and be counted. It's time to act, not talk. There's been enough talk, and the talk has done no good. Now there's got to be deeds. Now the powder's been set, and somebody's got to light the match. Somebody's got to be the hero."

"Would you mind telling me what you're talking about?" Steve said.

"Revolution," Bob answered. His voice rolled around the syllables. "Revolutions are started when the time is right. They are started by somebody building a barricade in the streets, somebody shouting the battle cry and raising the flag. That somebody dies unless he's awfully lucky. But as he falls, somebody else grabs up the flag. And

somebody else echoes the cry. And ten more come to the barricade. Those ten may die, but they leave a hundred behind. And the conflagration grows until the tyrant is consumed. That, Steve, that is the way a revolution is born. And that is the only way we can break the tyrant."

"How do you know the time is right?" Steve asked. He felt stunned by the sudden revelation of fanaticism.

"I don't." Bob's voice brushed the thought aside. "And if it isn't I will die and so will the revolution. But even so—Even so my life will not be wasted. It will have been given to keep the spark of freedom and of sacrifice. And others will come after me, inspired perhaps by my example. And they will try again. They will try and try until the tyrants fall or there be no men left in all the human race. I may die, and my revolution with me, but my dying breath will fan the torch of liberty. And I shall have died a man."

"Well—" Steve hunted for words. "I suppose it's your right to do this, but it doesn't make sense to me. I don't think I am a coward. Or any more than most, at any rate. But I don't see the point. If you had any reasonable chance of success—Or any reasonable chance of surviving to try again—But to just start things blind! All by yourself. If you could only get an organization together, at least you would have a chance. There might be some point to it. But just to go out by yourself—What are you going to do?"

"I've got a knife. I shall go to Times Square this evening. And when I find an Outlander, he will die." His voice was gloating. "I shall ram the knife into him while I shout 'For Humanity!' And if there is another there, I will kill him, too. And another. And another. I will keep shouting my war cry 'For Humanity.' And I will be glad!"

"Times Square?" Steve asked. "You are in New York?"

"Yes," Bob said. "If you are here, too, come watch. Come watch and maybe you'll understand."

"I will," Steve said. "But look, if you want to kill them, and don't care whether you die yourself or not, I should think you would at least pick a little less sensational way. Go prowling the streets at night. And when you meet an Outlander kill him. But do it quietly, and secretly. Then maybe

you'll live to kill another one. This way, you have not got a chance."

"No," Bob said. "There's lots of people have tried the other. They've tried to kill in the night, to bomb and to murder, to do it with stealth and with guile. But they haven't ever succeeded. The Outlanders expect that, and are ready for it. And those who have tried that way have died. They have died without killing an Overlord, and without doing any good at all.

"The Outlanders expect the knife-in-the-dark approach. But they don't expect the frontal attack. They don't expect the bold try. It's only by boldness, by sheer audacity, that you can accomplish anything. I'll show you what I mean tonight."

"Well . . . all right, I'll be there," Steve hesitantly agreed, feeling as if he had just lost a wrestling bout. But he knew, from the intimacy of the mental bond, that there was no use arguing further. Bob was no longer sane. The light of martyrdom had entered into him and he was no longer capable of rational thought.

Night had fallen when Steve stood on the corner of Times Square and did his best to look completely innocent. He watched across the street where a tall, red-headed chap with an intent face lounged against a building. This, he knew, was Bob, for the latter had identified himself by telepathically describing in minute detail his every action until Steve had been able to pick him out of the crowd. He stood there now, leaning against the building looking rather unrelaxed but doing his best.

As Steve looked around, he saw, coming down the street, an Overlord, dressed in their distinctive robes. He watched him approach Bob and knew that this was the one that the would-be revolutionist had selected.

As the intended victim came opposite the place where the redhead leaned against the wall, Bob suddenly leaped forward, drawing from under his coat a wicked-looking knife. As he leaped he shouted "For Huma-a-a—" but he did not finish. He did not because, as he jumped, there was a blue glow from under the robe of the Outlander and Bob fell at the Invader's feet. The knife skittered across the pavement and toppled into the gutter. And Steve felt a wrenching, a twisting that was a pain but

yet no pain. And he knew that Bob was dead.

Dazedly, he saw the Invader keep on, with scarcely a break in his stride. He saw two men dressed in dark suits drag the body unceremoniously through a doorway. And he saw the crowds of people—of human people—stand for a moment, shocked and stunned, but uncomprehending. And he saw them move on talking, wondering, but, in their lack of understanding, untouched. And he knew with exquisite sadness that Bob's attack—his sacrifice of life itself—had done nothing to "fan the torch of liberty." Nothing at all.

#### *Interoffice Memo.*

To: Igor

Subject: Steve Redland/Marcus.K4976-aq94

Date: August 20

Your Highness will be pleased to learn that the referenced subject being prepared as a Prime Focus Entity, has been processed successfully through Step Four. Preparations are being made for Step Five.

Your Highness will understand that Step Five itself may be delayed somewhat. Careful preparation is required which will take time. Our investment in this individual is now sufficient to warrant a slow and painstaking approach. We therefore crave Your Highness' indulgence.

According to Your Highness' last memo I am to be honored with the attendance of Your Highness' personal secretary. I shall, of course, welcome her, and afford her all courtesy. I am, however, deeply perplexed by this move. Your Highness has expressed a certain dissatisfaction regarding some of my acts. Specifically Your Highness mentions my failure to turn over the files on the reference individual. I have, however, pointed out that for me to do so would make impossible the further processing of the subject Prime Focus candidate. I do not understand why Your Highness persists in calling this "an act of defiance." And I do not understand what Your Highness expects your secretary to accomplish, other than to distract us from our job. I hereby formally protest this action.

Klan.

Nancy and Phil. Of five, two were dead. And soon they all would be. There was no time. No time to fight. No time to learn how to fight. No time to live.



And yet, that was not true. Not entirely. He was not dead yet. No, Steve was very much alive. Only two friends left, but those two were very close indeed. Nancy was more than close. He had discovered he loved her. Loved with a subtle understanding no words could build. And Phil was a close friend. They thought apart, he and Phil. There was a basic difference of approach that bespoke a different temperament. But there was no antagonism. The difference was one that each could accept in the other. They were friends.

In these two he was alive. With these two he was still linked with humanity, still part of life. When they both died, then he, too, would be dead. But in the meantime, while this link held firm and vital, he was still alive.

There was no point, he knew, in giving up. To give up was to die and he was not dead. To fight was to live, and there was within him a bright hatred, a gleaming steel-hard coldness, that would not let him die without a fight.

To kill the Outlanders, or, at least, to drive them out. That was the problem. That was the objective to which all humanity would subscribe. And among those who had endured an "interrogation," at least, that was a goal for which anyone would gladly make any sacrifice at all.

The tools were at hand. Victory could be had. Like a phonograph record, he heard his "interrogator's" words come back: "We dare not let even the germ of revolution get started." And again: "Our only defense is to stamp out even the smallest hint of aberration." According to the words of the Overlord himself, they had but to unite in common action and the Invaders would no longer be able to hold their tyranny.

The will was there. The tools were there. All that was lacking was a plan. A detailed plan in which each person would know his part and his time. The plan was missing, and, worse, there was no way apparent by which a plan could be obtained. Communications. Therein lay the fault. The net was there but they dared not use the net. Not at least to carry the information that was needed to form the plan they wanted.

Communications were their lack. And this was odd. They had in their possession an almost perfect means of communication. Telepathy. The ideal channel, it would seem, for conspiracy, and secret planning.

And yet they dared not use it. They dared not even tell each other what city they lived in nor any other detailed fact. So no one knew even what the net was like. The net of people joined telepathically, one with another, that could be used as the nucleus of revolution. No one, anywhere, had even an approximate picture of the net, nor even any knowledge of its size.

The reason for this was clear. The Outlanders kept raiding it. They kept working from one member to the next, destroying them as they found them. The result was that the members of the net were afraid of it. They shied away from revealing themselves. They held back, not seeing what would be accomplished by the added risk.

How could a leader arise that would be able to command the allegiance of the net? How could he persuade them each to take the added risk for his sake? How could leadership be asserted? That was the problem.

"Yes, that's the problem," Phil cut in. "And actually it's even worse than that. We have Joe, here, say, trying to be a leader. Maybe he's got the magnetism, the personality, the whatever-it-is, to command Henry and Alice and Jim who are linked directly to him. But how does he command Roger who knows Henry but not Joe himself. Or Mary who knows Roger but none of the others. Or et cetera. Leadership depends on personal contact. It must, because it depends on personal trust. Now telepathy is a fine way to make personal contact. But the net, as you call it, has a peculiar feature. You have a wonderful contact with me and maybe a few others. You know me and these others as men have only dreamed of knowing each other. But—and this is a very big but—you have no contact at all with anybody else in the net. And therefore, you cannot lead them."

"That's a discouraging way to put it," Steve said.

"It is," Phil agreed. "I doubt if a revolution is possible within the net. I think you've got to forget about the net and use the age-old methods of meeting in dark corners and of talking in code. I do not think the net is any use at all."

"I wonder," Steve answered. "That would make it difficult. The net, or my part in it, is too much a part of me. I don't think I could use any other method."

"Yes, I know what you mean," Phil said.

"You know, I got a suspicion that maybe they have deliberately set up the net. We have assumed that this telepathy is a by-product of the 'interrogation.' An accidental one. But maybe it's deliberate. Maybe they set it up, knowing the net cannot be used for revolution, and knowing that we cannot form a revolution outside it. This would be a very dirty trick but it might work."

"It might at that," Steve admitted. "What can we do about it?"

"Nothing," Phil answered, and there was a deep discouragement in his voice. "Nothing that I know of except to try and survive. And even survival is relative. What's the odds that I'll still be alive tomorrow? If I had any choice, I wouldn't bet."

"Why the discouragement?" Steve asked. "I thought you were the one that was so sure you could beat them. Threw away your identity and took to the streets so they couldn't find you. 'Reduce the problem of survival to getting the simple necessities, and not of convincing them of your innocence,' you said. You sound like you've changed your mind."

"I don't know," Phil replied. "Maybe I have. Oh, I think it's right in principle. Simplify the problem. Make it into one you can attack by your own efforts. Make survival hinge on yourself, and not on Them. Only I don't think it works."

"Why not?" Steve asked.

"It's nothing much I can put my finger on," Phil answered. "It's just that I feel I've been the mouse to their cat. That they could have picked me up any time. Any time at all. And that they didn't because they didn't want to, and not because I was smarter than they were. I don't like being a mouse."

"But why do you think so?" Steve asked. "And how could they?"

"I can't prove it," Phil said. "It's not anything I can put my finger on. Not definite. But I've found food too easily. I've been too lucky. As if they were letting me have my run, and even helping me. It's been too pat."

"As to how, that's another question. I've been thinking that maybe they know a lot more about this telepathy than we give them credit for. I got an idea that during the 'interrogation' they do something to us quite deliberately. Maybe the purpose is to fix things so they can locate any one of us at all any time. Like a mental fingerprint which they can tune in and home on

whenever they want. And maybe it's an accidental by-product that some of those 'fingerprints' will tune in on each other. And we can use them for telepathy. This makes more sense to me than assuming it's all accidental."

"Yes." Steve was thinking deeply. "Yes, it does. And, you know, one of my friends made the remark that a lot of people had tried the underground method of attack, but that they had all died without doing any good at all. Is that true? If it is, maybe that's the reason why. Going underground would be completely useless if they could trace you any time."

"I think that may be so," Phil said. "I knew one who tried it. He didn't last long. He was lying in ambush when they burned him down. He was dead before he knew he was being attacked. No, it is said that you can't ambush them, and as far as I know it's true. That's why I never tried. And it does fit with this 'fingerprinting' idea. They could perfectly well make it a warning of hostile intent as well as a locating system."

"They could," Steve said. "At least providing it's physically possible, and I do not see why, if we assume the one, there is any reason not to think the other. In fact, why stop there? Why not assume that they can, if they want, listen in. There probably aren't enough of them to do much of a Monitoring job. Not considering how few there are on Earth and how many other things they got to do. So maybe that's how we escape. But maybe They can if they want to." He was quiet a moment. "And that thought makes the problem of revolution really tough, doesn't it?"

"Quite." Phil's voice was dry. "Frankly, I think it's impossible. As far as I know—" There was a sudden tenseness, a sudden fear. "I think, Steve, we are right." Phil's voice was quick and sharp. "Because they're coming. They are coming as if they knew exactly where I was, and they are coming with drawn guns. I think we are too near the truth. I think they heard us. And I think—"

There was the sharp wrenching, the twisting pain that had no form, that was so horribly familiar to him now. And Steve knew that Phil was dead.

Why had Phil died? Was it indeed because he had been too near the truth, Steve wondered? Was it because he had guessed that the Overlords knew more of telepathy

than had been supposed? And were Phil's guesses right?

*Interoffice Memo.*

To: Igor

Subject: Steve Redland/Marcus K4976-aq94

Date: August 22

According to Your Highness' last memo, I am to defer taking any action until Your Highness' personal secretary has had a chance to report. Since she appears to be mostly interested in other things than reports, it is difficult to anticipate the ultimate effects of Your Highness' directive. I shall, or course, comply with the directive to the maximum extent possible consistent with the objectives of Project Earth. I would like to point out, however, that circumstances can easily arise in which failure to take action may prejudice the entire operation. One such event has already happened, in fact. To prevent the complete collapse of the projected development of the subject Prime Focus Entity, it was necessary to remove the Step Five Motivator. This individual will, of course, have to be replaced and the conditions re-established for Step Five. It is believed that no damage resulted, although, of course, delay will ensue. However, since Your Highness' directive will cause serious delay, this is of no importance.

If Your Highness will permit, I would like to point out that Your Highness' apparent distrust of myself is not in accord with the objective of Project Earth. I did, in fact, overhear a comment to the effect that such inconsistencies were responsible for the failure of Project Earth to date. The one who made the remark now wishes that he hadn't, as Your Highness can well imagine. However, I pass the remark along for whatever value Your Highness may find in it.

Klan.

Only Nancy was left, now. Only she was left of the five that he had started with. Whenever he could he talked with her. He talked with her of many things, opening his mind and his soul to her. For he was in love with her.

"How can I love you?" he asked her one evening as he sat watching the sunset from his window. His voice was light and warm with a teasing chuckle in it. "For all I know you are short and dumpy and walk with a waddle. Or maybe you are

skin and bones with the face of a crone. How can I love you in the face of such appalling risks?"

She laughed back at him. "Look out your window," she told him. "Or go down to the streets. Look at the girls that pass. Some will have blue eyes and some will not. There will be all sizes and shapes and figures. Pick the one you like the best and take a good look at her—and then come back to me. Because you will love me, not her. Love, my boy, is not born of a pretty face. Or if it is, it soon needs more solid nourishment. Love is built of empathy. It is a mutual understanding, and a willingness to know each other. It is a reaching out, and a fulfilment. And a pretty face and a good figure are not of vital importance to this."

"Besides which, I'll have you know I can compete with most."

"But what do you look like?" Steve pressed.

"No," she answered decisively. "Use your imagination. Build your dream of me. Make of me what you want. And be content with that."

"It is no good," he said, suddenly serious,

## Nat Fleischer's boxing books...

HOW TO BOX  
TRAINING FOR BOXERS  
SCIENTIFIC  
BLOCKING & HITTING  
HOW TO REFEREE &  
JUDGE A FIGHT  
HOW TO SECOND &  
MANAGE A BOXER

all 8/6 each

# Ring

★ Record Book ★  
for 1953  
post 50% free

Send your orders and enquiries to:—  
Atlas Publishing & Distributing Co. Ltd.  
15 BRIDE LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4

"It's not enough. I love you, Nancy. In all this world there is just you and I, we two. No more. I cannot be content with dreams."

"I'm sorry but you must," she said. Her voice was gentle. "I love you, too. In the words of lovers always, you are the sun and I the moon. You are the beat of my heart. You are my love. But you are there and I am here and there can be no more than that."

"Buy why? Why?" Steve cried out with sudden urgency. "Look, there is no hope. We are lost, you and I. When they want us, they will take us. And nothing we can do will change that. You need not act in fear, for there is nothing you can do. Accept it, Nancy. Accept it, and let us live what life we may."

"Oh, Steve," she said, "do you really think it's fear that keeps me here? Fear for myself?"

"What is it, then?" he asked.

"Fear for you, Steve. For you alone," she answered.

"Then there is no problem," he said. "I will tell you about me, so you will know the facts. And then you will be free."

"No!" Her voice cried. "No, Steve. Don't do it. You don't understand. I was not going to tell you but now I must. They were here and questioned me. They left but they'll be back. I can't have satisfied them. I hate them, Steve. I hate them and they know it. They'll be back."

"And don't you see, Steve? I can stand it. I can curse them—I can curse them while I still feel proud of being human. But if I know that there is in me sufficient knowledge so that I will cause your death, too, then I will not feel proud, but ashamed of the weakness that is in me. And then I could not stand it."

"If you shout out your name, Steve—your name and all the other unimportant details that make you who as well as what you are—then there will be but one thing I can do. If you do I shall kill myself. Only in that way can I help betraying you. Do you see, my dear?"

Steve saw. She was wrong, he knew. They could take him any time they wanted. There was no reason why her knowing him should make them want him now. There was no reason why the two of them should not take what life they could before they acted. But he also knew he could not convince her. He knew the strength of

her mind, and the certainty of her will. He knew she loved him too well to take the chance.

And then, like a blow, the rest of what she had said struck him. They had questioned her. They would take her soon. They would take her into headquarters and interrogate her. And they would break her. They would destroy her mind at least, and maybe kill her, too. Nancy, the girl he loved!

In sudden agony of desperation, he beat his fist against the wall. Time! Time! So little time. And why? Why? All they wanted was the chance to survive, to live a halfway normal life. Survival. It did not seem like much to ask. The chance to live. The chance to live free from the overpowering pressure of this thing that they were caught in. But this they could not have. This the Overlords denied them.

And suddenly, as he stood there pounding on the wall, he stopped. Suddenly he knew the answer. The sweat stood out on his brow as he thought of what he must do. He was afraid, deathly afraid. But the purpose within him was bright and sharp, and he knew that he would do it.

Softly he called to Nancy.

#### *Interoffice Memo.*

*To: Igor*

*Subject: Project Earth*

*Date: August 25*

*Reference: File on Steve Redland/  
Marcus K4976-aq94 attached.*

*Effective immediately, please accept my resignation from Project Earth. In addition, please receive my recommendation that Project Earth be immediately discontinued. I further recommend that steps be taken immediately to destroy Earth. In my opinion this must be done with such thoroughness as to insure that no single human survives. If this is not done, I feel confident that I have witnessed the end of our civilization. Only the most drastic and immediate action will avert this disaster.*

*I am forwarding a copy of this memo to the Council.*

*Your Highness is familiar with the background in this case. The Council, however, to whom I am sending a copy of this report, will not be. They should, of course, have a thorough knowledge of all details of Project Earth. It is the most important work being done in the galaxy. But they are,*

without a doubt, too busy. What they are too busy at is a question best left unasked. Hence, I shall simply review the entire project as briefly as I can.

Earth was initially discovered by a fool named Senator. Commander Senator. This was some seventy-five galactic years ago. The reports he brought back were so completely fantastic—so utterly contrary to basic common sense—that he was, of course, court-martialed. He died, I believe, some ten years later, in jail for piracy. This occurred three years after they had discovered that his reports were accurate.

Actually, this is not correct. His reports were not accurate. They were too conservative.

Consider. Earth, at the time of contact, contained as many people as the seven most populous worlds of the Federation put together! Over vast areas of it, the population density reached a value thirteen times Lomorr's Limit! And its cities! Perfectly fantastic.

The people of Earth had solved the riddle of the galaxy. They had learned to live together!

There is an odd paradox, here. As we later learned, it was a standard question on Earth to ask, "When will we grow up? When will we learn to live like adults in peace and mutual comfort?" And, in fact, during Phase One—the observational phase—there were two wars of major extent. To these all humans would point with shame and with guilt, as proof of their immaturity. And yet those wars involved huge armies, nearly half the world population were involved on each side. To get half the world co-operating, even if it is against the other half—! If their wars prove them immature, then what are we? But perhaps I should not ask that question!

It was recognized, then, that Earth contained the answer to the problem that has long been acknowledged as the foremost puzzle of the galaxy. Earth people could live together in densities and masses that no one else could approach. In one of its few intelligent moods, the Council established Project Earth to study their solution and to find out how they did it.

Phase One was observational. We sat up high in our saucers and watched. As they began to use the electromagnetic spectrum, we listened. We actually managed to learn quite a good deal by abducting a very small number of individuals during this phase.

We learned much, but it was not enough. What we learned merely served to deepen the paradox. We learned, for example, that there were many languages. Vast groups could not understand other sections of the population, and yet they managed to trade with each other—sometimes for the very necessities of life.

And we learned that there was a vast disparity of resources between the various sections. Some were wealthy with many tools and able to find the leisure to invent and build more. Others were poor, barely able to scratch a livelihood. And this, of course, is as you would expect. But the startling thing about it is that there seemed to have been a steady drive towards reducing this condition. The rich were actually helping the poor! Not, perhaps, as much, or in the ways that the poor might want, but helping nevertheless. Contrary to all the laws of sociology, the gap between the poor and the rich, the commoner and the aristocrat, the serf and the lord, was closing! Not steadily, not without reversals. But averaged over decades and centuries, the trend was there without a doubt.

This we learned in Phase One, but was not enough. It told us only that the answer we sought was there. And that it was an even more subtle—more revolutionary—answer than anyone had dreamed. But was no hint of where to seek the answer.

It was also true that Phase One was becoming dangerous. And this, too, was strange, and showed the existence of an amazing situation. At the start of Phase One, Earth had just barely begun to use the electromagnetic spectrum. Their main transportation was by animals. In the air they had only balloons. Yet forty galactic years later, they could transmit moving pictures by electromagnetic waves! On the ground they had perfected a vehicle operated by internal combustion of a quality comparable with those we have ourselves! And they possessed air-borne vehicles capable of exceeding the speed of sound! All this in forty years! How long, we had to ask, how long would it be before we could no longer control them? How soon would they have the hyper-drive? Already they were shooting rockets into the stratosphere and measuring the cosmic rays. How long would it be? How short?

As a result of these and other considera-



tions, therefore, we took over Earth. This was Phase Two.

It was, of course a mistake to take Earth over in quite the way it was. It should have been obvious that there was no need at all for such complete destruction—that it would only complicate the problem of reorganizing the World. It should have been obvious that the death of the millions that were destroyed and the mass destruction of communications would shatter the very civilization we were here to study. I confess that I consider this to have been an asinine mistake.

Your Highness will plead, I imagine, that he was misadvised. And, so far as it goes, this will be true. Certainly it is rare that any group has been as thoroughly wrong as the sociologists in this case. One by one Earth has mocked all their laws and theorems. And they have only escaped their shame by spreading confusion and symbolic lies like chaff before the wind. It will be up to the Council, however, to determine to what extent an autocrat is responsible for the advice he accepts.

There was little left of Earth after Phase Two. It required a major effort even to keep the people alive. Large quantities of food had to be imported. Cities had to be rebuilt with our own tools and powered by our own devices. Millions were dead from the war, and millions starved afterwards. But finally we managed to get things rolling. Finally, we could sit back and study our handiwork.

It was then we discovered a most strange fact. The cities were built to our design. They ran from our own Prime Generators. The tractors that tilled their farms used betaconverters instead of internal combustion engines. And the fertilizer plants burned the rocks themselves. This was a world built in our own image from our own materials. And we could not understand it.

Why did a farmer lend his neighbor his tractor? We did not order it. Why did he offer to show his neighbor how best to spread the new fertilizer? Why did he send his food to market, accepting for it only a worthless piece of paper that vaguely promised future value? And why was that promise good? And why was it made good, not by the man who took the farmer's goods, but by somebody else quite apart?

We had made this world, but the genius

of Earth had touched it, and we no longer understood it.

Phase Three was a period of intensive study. We analyzed the structure of the world, both as it had been before our arrival, and afterwards. We studied their literature and their texts. We studied their psychology. And nowhere could we find an answer.

We learned how their science had advanced so rapidly. How, in forty years, they had matched what other worlds had done in four thousand. The answer, we found, was simple. They worked together. If a man found out a fact, he could not move too fast or eagerly to spread the news over the world. With this attitude prevailing, of course their science moved at an incredible rate. But why did this attitude prevail? Why did they not keep this knowledge to themselves and make what use of it they could? Gain whatever advantage could be found? So the answer to the question was no answer at all. It did but pose the same old problem.

After much wasted effort, therefore, Phase Three was superseded. There are still some workers here who persist in clinging to it. These antiquated fossils insist the facts are all available. That we have but to put them together in the right order, and all will magically make sense. Perhaps. I do not suppose I can disprove it. And besides, it is perhaps the part of simple expediency to let them dwell in their delusion. At least they cannot do us harm.

Your Highness Initiated Phase Four. I cannot guess who could have thought of it. I would not have guessed that any of Your Highness' party would have had the inspiration for it. However, I must concede that I was wrong. Your Highness takes the credit for it. I congratulate you.

For the sake of the Council who undoubtedly have filed unopened all our progress reports. I shall explain. Phase Four a controlled experiment. We needed an environment in which we could observe in close detail the growth of this spirit of co-operation that moved so strangely across this world. We needed a situation in which it was initially completely absent so that we could trace its total development.

The proper environment was found by using the Mants-Reville procedure. As any school-child knows, but the Council probably does not, this is a procedure for developing limited telepathic abilities. It is

strictly outlawed in the galaxy since it is ideal for developing tight criminal bands. But it was useful here, because, with it, we could create an entirely new environment for a man. Also, we could monitor the communications of the net created with it and watch the development of social structure. It was the ideal environment for the experiment.

Having established the proper environment for the experiment—an environment in which we could observe the growth of co-operation—we then had to create the actual experiment. We had to provide the Mantis-Reville network with a problem that could be solved only by co-operative effort. And it had to be a problem that they wanted to solve.

The problem that we selected was survival. This, of course, would have the highest emotional drive. There would be the greatest urgency. And it could be applied easily. This was done by continually picking up or killing members of the network. No member lasted more than a few months. But we added members fast enough to keep the network stable in its totality. Thus we provided the problem.

The problem still needed to be focused. It needed to be given direction. This we could do by suggestion and indoctrination immediately after a subject had been given the Mantis-Reville procedure. At this time their critical abilities were at a very low ebb. They would not question why we should tell them that we, the Overlords, could not stand against a united humanity. We could tell them that, if they could only unite against us, we could direct them towards the class of solutions we wanted. We gave them a direct incentive to develop co-operation in the network.

Finally, we discovered that this was still not enough. Too often they developed unsatisfactory responses. They would attempt to solve the problem by some individual action—some method which was not co-operative—and which was therefore useless to us. And so we developed the method of the Prime Focus Entity.

This one known as Steve was such a one. He appeared to possess an inventive mind. He also appeared to have unusual stability, a quality that we considered desirable. He was selected as a candidate. We then proceeded to set up conditions so that we could demonstrate to him the unsatisfactoriness of all the unsatisfactory

solutions. We showed him that the five basic types of reactions—e.g. attack, flee, avoid, neglect, and succumb—were all useless on the individual level.

Max fled. He tried to be alone, to withdraw from the network. We killed him.

Quinn succumbed. He came to us as a traitor. He tried to buy his life with those of his friends. We let him escape and leave the headquarters building so that Steve could hear him. And then we killed him.

Bob attacked. This was somewhat tricky. These humans have a peculiar characteristic of not considering the loss of their own lives as necessarily a complete disaster. Particularly when death occurs during an attack attempt. Why, no one knows. But we have found empirically, that it is considered futile when there is no subsequent reaction to the individual's death. We hypno-suggested to Bob that he attack and arranged that he die while so doing in a very futile way. Only so could we show Steve that attack by the individual was not a useful solution.

Phil avoided. We had him run, attempting to lose his identity. I told Your Highness that this step had failed. Actually, this was not so. However, Your Highness had ordered me to defer all action and there seemed no point to that. I therefore said that Phil had been on the verge of upsetting all plans, and had had to be removed. Actually he was operating strictly according to plan. We had had him hypothesize the impossibility of losing his identity. We then killed him to prove it.

Finally, Nancy typified the neglect response. 'Let us ignore it all, and enjoy what life we can.' She also served another purpose. It is another wholly inexplicable phase of human behavior that they are

### THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY

12 Beesborough Gardens, London, S.W.1

Membership is open to all interested in  
rocket engineering and space-flight.

Full particulars, together with a free copy  
of the Society's Journal and programme of  
lectures, film shows, etc., will be sent on  
request.

Annual Subscription . . . £1 11 6

" (under 21) . . . 1 1 0

Entrance Fee . . . 0 10 6



## Give me 15 minutes a Day and I'll give you a **MAGNETIC PERSONALITY**

That's my unconditional guarantee! No matter how colourless your personality is, how lacking you are in the qualities of leadership, how timid and self-conscious you may be, Shaftesbury's famous book—**INSTANTANEOUS PERSONAL MAGNETISM**—will give you a dominant, forceful personality. This amazing book will show you how the minds of others may be swayed—how to appear at your best, how to dominate situations through force of personality. It is a power that all can develop and use. After forty years of research, with experiments among thousands of people and private data acquired at a cost of thousands of pounds, Edmund Shaftesbury now reveals in **INSTANTANEOUS PERSONAL MAGNETISM** every method, every secret, every proven plan. Having successfully taught 700,000 men and women throughout the world, he stands as the greatest living authority and teacher upon the subject.

### STRANGE EFFECTS ON READERS

A strange book! A book that seems to cast a spell over every person who turns its pages! A copy was left lying on a hotel table for a few weeks. Four hundred people saw the book—read a few pages—and then sent for a copy. In another case a Doctor placed a copy on the table in his waiting room. More than two hundred of his patients saw the book—read part of it—and then ordered copies for themselves. Thousands of keen-minded, ambitious men and women in all walks of life are sending for it—are ordering extra copies for friends—are praising it as “the wonder book.”

### NEW—ABSORBING—STARTLING

Why are men and women so profoundly affected by this book—so anxious to get a copy? The answer is simple. The book reveals to them for the first time how any man or woman—young or old—can develop a Magnetic Personality. It explains how to gain the personal charm that attracts countless friends—the self-confidence that ensures success in any business or profession. No tiresome study, no dull lessons or courses, no long-drawn-out theories, no difficult things to understand. You see at once things that grip you. They fasten themselves in your mind; they are new, absorbing, startling. The light of new understanding fills your mind and floods your being. Defy it as you will, its influence will creep into your system! That's why it is regarded as one of the most startling books ever published. You will realise at once that here is exactly what you have been looking for.

### WRITE FOR FREE ILLUSTRATED BROCHURE

which fully describes this amazing book. You will be astonished what **Instantaneous Personal Magnetism** will mean to you in business, in contact with people. Send at once for your **FREE** copy. No cost. No obligation. **PSYCHOLOGY PUBLISHING CO. LTD.** (Dept. MGM/F1), Psychology House, Marple, Cheshire.

## ABOUT YOGA

By HARVEY DAY

### The Complete Philosophy

3rd Impression 8/-

This absorbing and thought provoking new book explains how the regular practice of Yoga will clear the mind—increase one's power of concentration and disperse worry and fear. Herein is explained What is Yoga—Yoga Hygiene—Yoga and Food—Yoga Breathing—Yoga and Sleep—Yoga and the Emotions, etc. etc.

By W. J. ENNEVER, Founder of Pelmanism

### YOUR MIND AND HOW TO USE IT

6/6

Sales exceed 50,000 copies.

A complete course of self-instruction. Deals with all essential mental needs: concentration, memory, self-confidence, fears, inferiority feelings, will-power, imagination, personality. It offers a plan by world-famous experts for developing a trained mind at a fraction of the usual cost.

By JAS. HEWITT

### RELAX AND BE SUCCESSFUL

3/10

In this new book the author teaches the art of complete relaxation and energy conservation, the practice of which will restore and build up reserves of nervous energy, thus resulting in a high standard of mental and bodily health.

By DR. BERNHARD DETMAR, M.D., Ph.D.

### NERVOUS DISORDERS AND

#### HYSTERIA

6/6

This outstanding book deals fully with both conditions, their connection with organic disease, and their treatment by natural methods. In addition, treatment by psychological means is examined. Chapters on Insomnia, sex life, gastric and intestinal neuroses, constipation, etc., are included.

By KEITH BARRY

### WRITING FOR PROFIT

5/6

A complete course in Journalism and Short Story Writing, setting out the basic principles of word power and showing how to model material for presentation in acceptable form.

By J. LOUIS ORTON

### HYPNOTISM MADE PRACTICAL

6/6

9th Edition.

In no other book can you find the facts given herein—it clears the ground of all fallacies and shows how to induce Hypnosis and how this remarkable science can be applied for the benefit of all.

### THE CURE OF STAMMERING,

#### Stuttering, and other Speech Disorders

3/10

There is no need to endure the misery of Faulty Speech or Harsh Utterance! This book is the remedy. The simple non-operative means which have cured thousands are clearly set out.

By JAS. C. THOMSON

### HIGH AND LOW BLOOD PRESSURE

6/6

The how and why of low and high blood pressure and the simple naturopathic home treatment for this prevalent condition is fully explained.

### HOW TO OBTAIN HEALTHY HAIR

2/9

Sales exceed 50,000 copies.

Practical Home Treatment for Hair and Scalp Disorders, including Baldness, Dandruff, Alopecia, Falling Hair, etc. etc.

By H. BENJAMIN

### BETTER SIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES

6/6

Sales exceed 150,000 copies.

The author cured himself of rapidly approaching blindness, and has embodied his successful methods in this book for the benefit of all sufferers.

The above books are obtainable through your bookseller or direct (postage extra) from the publishers,

## THORSONS PUBLISHERS LTD

Dept. 91, 91 ST. MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON, W.6.2

# INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

OFFER YOU SPARE-TIME

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL  
COURSES OF INSTRUCTION

Air-Conditioning  
Architecture  
Boilermaking  
Building Construction  
Building Specifications  
Carpentry & Joinery  
Chemical Engineering  
Chemistry, I. & O.  
Civil Engineering  
Clerk of Works  
Coal Mining  
Concrete Engineering  
Diesel Engines  
Draughtsmanship  
Electrical Engineering  
Electric Power, Lighting,  
Trans. and Traction  
Engineering Shop Practice  
Farming (Arable &  
Livestock)  
Fire Engineering  
Foremanship  
Fuel Technology  
Heating and Ventilation  
Horticulture  
Hydraulic Engineering  
Illumination Engineering  
Industrial Management

Internal Combustion  
Engineering  
Maintenance Eng.  
Marine Engineering  
Mechanical Drawing  
Mechanical Engineering  
Mining Engineering  
Motor Engineering  
Motor Mechanics  
Municipal Engineering  
Plastics  
Plumbing  
Production Engineering  
Quantity Surveying  
Radio Engineering  
Radio Service and Sales  
Refrigeration  
Sanitary & Domestic  
Engineering  
Sheet-Metal Work  
Steam Engineering  
Structural Steelwork  
Surveying (state which  
branch)  
Television Technology  
Welding, Gas & Electric  
Works Engineering  
Works Management

# SPECIAL TRAINING

FOR SUCCESS IN MODERN  
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

## Commercial and Academic

Accountancy	Commercial Training
Auditing	Journalism
Advertising Copy Writing	Languages
Advertising Management	Salesmanship
Business Management	Sales Management
Commercial Art	Short-Story Writing

## Examinations

Technical, Commercial, Professional, R.S.A. and Civil Service. Also Advertising Assoc.; I.S.M.A. and U.C.T.A. in Salesmanship; I.I.A. in Foremanship; Royal Horticultural Society and General Certificate of Education Exams. State yours on coupon.

I.C.S. Students are coached till successful. Fees are moderate and include all books required.

Generous Discount to H.M. Forces.

THOUSANDS OF AMBITIOUS  
MEN HAVE SUCCEEDED  
THROUGH I.C.S. HOME-STUDY  
COURSES. SO ALSO CAN YOU.

If you are willing to  
devote some of your  
leisure hours to  
study

WE CAN  
TRAIN YOU  
FOR SUCCESS

The successful man DOES  
to-day what the failure  
INTENDS doing to-morrow

WRITE TO US NOW.

The I.C.S.

Dept. 8A, International Bldgs.  
Kingsway, LONDON, W.C.2

WRITE—OR USE THIS COUPON

## INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS. LTD.

Dept. 8A, INTERNATIONAL BUILDINGS  
KINGSWAY, LONDON, W.C.2

Please send free booklet about I.C.S. Instruction in (state  
subject or examination)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block Letters Please)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Addresses for Overseas Readers

Australia: 140 Elizabeth Street, Sydney  
Egypt: 40 Sharia Abdel Khalek Sarwat Pasha, Cairo.  
Ire: 13 Anglessa Street, Dublin, C.4.  
India: Lakshmi Building, Sir Pherozsha Mehta Road,  
Fort, Bombay.  
New Zealand: 182 Wakefield Street, Wellington  
N. Ireland: 26 Howard Street, Belfast.  
South Africa: Dept. L, 45 Shortmarket Street,  
Cape Town.



driven to action by threats to other humans more violently and surely than even by threats to themselves. Not any others, but only some. Mostly these others will be humans of the opposite sex. And mostly there will be a single such one. We have found empirically that these relations can be set up by pairing individuals of appropriately matched characteristics. This is purely a rule-of-thumb operation. We have no explanation. We can only say that it works. And Nancy was, unquestionably, the right individual for Steve.

We did not kill Nancy. We merely told her—and through her Steve—that she was about to be picked up. Had she been killed, that stimulus would have been removed and Steve would probably have sunk to apathy. But with only a threat to her, Steve was goaded to desperation. And, at the same time, he was led to abandon the neglect response.

The problem had been given Steve. He had been shown that no individual response could be a satisfactory solution. And he had been placed in a position where he had to find a response. And he found it.

Yes, he found a response. And in so doing, he was the first of all the Prime Focus Entities to find an effective one. But the one he found was useless to us. It was not a satisfactory solution to us. For the solution he found was to guess what the purpose of the problem was! He guessed that he was an element in a controlled experiment. And he guessed the purpose of that experiment. And he told us so, and told us to "go to hell."

This, you will note, was not particularly bad in itself. What made his answer so effective was that he told it to Nancy. And he told it to her sentence by sentence, phase by phase. And between each sentence, he had her repeat it to those others in the network that she knew. And he had her have those others repeat it to those they knew.

It was now a little more than one hour after Steve first called to Nancy. It is estimated that fifty thousand people know now what Steve knew then. Soon everybody will know.

It is the obvious essence of experiment that the subject should not know what you are trying to prove. When the experimental animals know why you do what you do, what hope is there for an intelligent result?

Project Earth is through. Steve has

destroyed it. He has destroyed any chance of finding out on Earth what is the essence of co-operation. It is through, and I recommend that the Council acknowledge this fact, and terminate it immediately.

Project Earth is through. And it leaves behind it a deadly heritage. For Earth has shown that the spirit of co-operation is the most effective tool the galaxy has ever seen. Imagine the fantastic power of millions of people united in a common purpose and willing to make any sacrifice to achieve it. Who can stand against it?

I have seen this world destroyed. And I have seen it rebuilt. And then I have seen it touched by the magic of what these people call "faith." And I know that that magic can do anything. Anything at all.

What is the danger? It is simple. The danger is that others will see this, too. And that they'll take these humans and give them worlds of the galaxy, members of the Federation. In their egoisms they will think to use humans as the tools of their own lust for power. And they will succeed. But in the end these humans will take over the galaxy. For I am convinced that nothing can stand in their way.

It is for this reason that I have recommended to the Council that immediate steps be taken, not only to terminate Project Earth, but also to destroy Earth, and all the people on it. They are deadly to our way of life. Only by their destruction can we save our civilization.

If the Council is pleased to take this advice and recommendation, it will have demonstrated a most unusual but welcome ability to recognize the realities of the situation. I confess that I do not expect this, however. I am too long familiar with the Council's habit of procrastination and prevarication. Too aware of how difficult it is for Councilmen to agree on anything but graft. I am therefore acting on the assumption that they will not. It is for this reason that I—and Your Highness' secretary, who has proven herself to be interested in quite other things than reports—have gathered up Steve and Nancy and a few selected others. By the time you shall have read this, we shall be far away. With their help I—and Your Highness' ex-secretary—expect to die some day as rulers of at least one world and maybe more. Perhaps the galaxy!

Respectfully submitted,

Klan.